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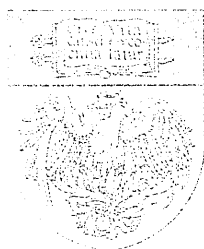
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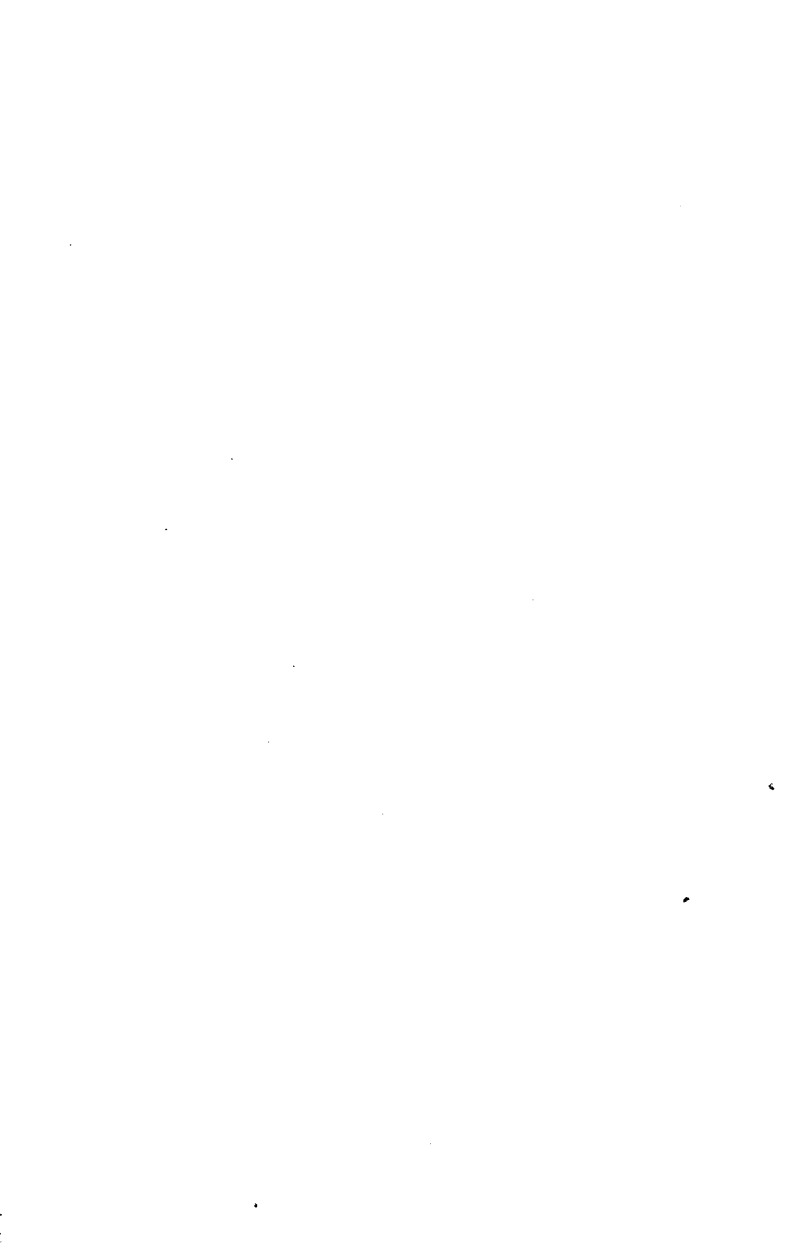
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THE CHURCH'S CREEDS
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THE MODERN MAN

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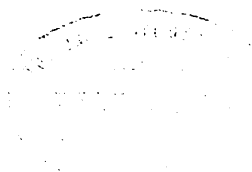
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To All Those
who are striving to hold
The Mystery of the Faith
in a pure conscience
and desire to affirm that Faith
in a true and simple creed
and
to those Fathers in God
who have the courage and wisdom
to fulfil their desire
I dedicate
this little book

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PREFACE

(AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL)

WHEN I was very young my father taught me the Apostles' Creed. That was for many years "the creed" to me. When as a lad I was prepared for Confirmation I learnt for my clergyman the Nicene Creed. At a later stage in good Queen Victoria's days, in an Antipodean British Colony, I began the study of theology, and I then learnt the XXXIX Articles by heart "with Scripture proofs". Article VIII still further extended my knowledge of the creeds for it stated that :

"The Three Creeds, Nicene Creed, Athanasius's Creed, and that which is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, ought thoroughly to be received and believed : for they may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture."

I now realized that there were three creeds—neither more nor less, like the Three Divine Persons of the Blessed Trinity, and that the *Quicumque Vult* was one of them. I did not understand that document at this time, but it was reassuring to know that its statements, like those of the other two creeds, could be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture. That for me was a perfectly satisfactory reason for receiving and believing the creeds. At that stage I believed that every word of the Bible was true, and therefore creeds which could be proved by Holy Scripture must of necessity be true also.

At a later stage I came up to Oxford. I then took up the study of Biblical and Dogmatic Theology in an environment whose tone and temper seemed as disconcerting as it was different from that in which I had formerly lived. It seemed to attach no importance to belief or unbelief: all that it was concerned with was to know and to know accurately. I had in my Antipodean University taken an Honours Degree in Natural Science and I recognized that in Oxford we had the spirit of science dominant in our theological studies. That spirit, however, was unfortunately called, not scientific, but "critical".

Here I acquired enlarged but distinctly disturbing knowledge of the creeds. I was referred to Hahn's *Bibliothek der Symbole*¹ and was amazed to see that that industrious Teuton had collected some 246 Creeds or Confessions of Christian Faith composed during the first fifteen hundred years of the Church's history.

I found, moreover, that the idea that dogmatic statements were to be proved by texts drawn from Holy Scripture was ignored as quite out-of-date. There were metaphysical proofs, and there were historical proofs, and there were scientific proofs, but Scripture proofs were never referred to. As I proceeded with the critical study of Holy Scripture I had no difficulty in perceiving why this was the case. Some of my fellow-students spoke of the authority of the Church in these matters, especially in the meetings of a society known as *De Rebus Ecclesiasticis*; but my tutor and the Professors made no reference

¹ Third edition, Breslau, 1897.

to this authority and as I listened to their lectures it was quite apparent why they did not.

As I proceeded with my studies I became acquainted with a number of facts and was moved to a number of reflections, some of which I propose to relate in this volume. When I recited the creed in Church I still stood up, turned to the East, crossed my hands before me, and bowed my head at the Name of Jesus, as I had been taught to do ; but though the posture of my body and the ancient words were unchanged, the creed itself had come to mean to me something different from what it had formerly meant. I no longer took its statements literally, and in so far as I believed them at all, it was for very different reasons from those which had satisfied me when a lad. That was natural enough ; it was inevitable : it is the sort of experience which every sincere and modern-minded Churchman must go through in this age of transition, yet it was not a happy experience. I now possessed a changing faith but an unchanging creed, and naturally they did not fit each other as comfortably as when the unchanged faith was able to express itself adequately and literally in the words of the ancient creed.

The purpose of this little book is two-fold. First, it seeks to give in simple and untechnical form certain assured results of the modern critical study of the creeds, and secondly, in the light of this knowledge, it pleads with our Church authorities for a serious and courageous reconsideration of the present use of these ancient documents in modern church life.

THE CREEDS AND THE MODERN MAN

CHAPTER I

THE PRIMITIVE USE OF CREEDS

WHAT is a creed ?

A creed sets forth the dogmas of the Christian Faith.

What is a dogma ?

The Greek word *dogma* has two distinct uses.

(1) First it is used of the fundamental postulate or conviction of a philosopher. Thus it can be said : "Happiness is the supreme good" is the dogma of Epicurus : or "All things flow" is the dogma of Heraclitus.

(2) Secondly it is used of a decree or legal enactment. Thus St. Luke writes : "There went forth a dogma (decree) from Cæsar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled." (*Luke* ii, 1.) This second use of dogma as a decree enforced by penalties has a very unpleasant sound for English ears.

The Christian creeds began by being dogmas in the first sense but unfortunately became in time dogmas in the second sense—something decreed by authority which an individual could only ignore, or reject, at his peril. Such rejection constituted the crime of heresy, and for some centuries the penalty of heresy was to be burnt alive at the stake. It is this

terrible, dogmatic and penal use of the Christian creed, connected in men's minds with the horrors of the Inquisition, that has created a prejudice against all dogmatic expressions of the Christian Faith. In the beginning, however, it was not so.

I

The earliest creed simply expressed the primary Christian conviction. This conviction the would-be Christian had to make his own ere he was made a member of the Christian Church by the initiatory rite of Baptism. This then was the earliest use of the creed. It was used in Baptism. All the earliest Christian creeds are baptismal creeds.

II

But before the candidate for Baptism could profess the creed, it was necessary for him to be taught it. Hence we have besides the baptismal use of the creed the catechetical or didactic use of the creed. Courses of instruction were given by Christian catechists to the catechumens or candidates for baptism. These courses of instruction were based on the Baptismal creed. We have some of them still preserved from ancient times: for instance a course of catechetical lectures by St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, and another course by the great St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.

The Catechist begins his lecture by pronouncing the article of the creed on which he is to lecture. He then explains it. He then gives reasons for

believing it and holding it fast and concludes his lecture with the reiteration of it. Thus was the creed taught article by article to those who desired Baptism.

This was called the delivery of the creed (*traditio symboli*). At his baptism, in answer to the bishop or baptizing deacons the catechumen affirmed the creed clause by clause. This was called returning or giving back of the creed (*redditio symboli*). Some commentators think that the writer of I *Peter* iii, 21, when he speaks of Baptism as “the answer of a good conscience toward God”, is referring to this “giving back of the creed”.

A good example of the Dialogue of the Baptismal declaration is furnished in the account of the Baptism of Palmatius in the Roman church about A.D. 220 I translate from the document, which is in Latin :

Dost thou believe with all thy heart, in God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible ?

And Palmatius replied I believe.

And in Jesus Christ, His Son ?

He says, I believe.

Who was born of the Holy Spirit by the Virgin Mary ?

Palmatius replied, I believe.

And in the Holy Spirit :

The Holy Catholic Church :

The Remission of Sins :

And in the Resurrection of the flesh ?

And Palmatius cried out with tears, saying, I believe,
O Lord. (*Hahn*, p. 34).

The creed was called “the Symbol” from a Greek word meaning “a watch-word or pass-word”. Hence in the Latin it was called *tessera*, a word which has

a similar meaning. The Christian proved himself to another Christian that he was a member of the Christian Church by his ability to recite their common creed.

III

At a much later stage than the baptismal and catechetical use of the creed is the use of it to test the orthodoxy of Christian bishops and teachers and to exclude from office, or even membership in the Church, those who could not and would not make their Christian confession in the terms of the creed prescribed. Creeds of this kind, in contrast to the *Baptismal* creeds, are called *Conciliar* creeds because, like the Nicene Creed, of our Prayer Book, they were drawn up or promulgated, by Church Councils and added to by them.

The Nicene Creed, in its original form, was used primarily to exclude the heretics known as Arians, who refused to confess that the divine nature of our Lord was the same as the nature of the Divine Father. All the bishops at Nicaea,¹ some 318 of them, were required to subscribe the Creed. The two² who refused to were deprived of their bishoprics and banished. At this time the custom came in of attaching anathemas or curses to creeds. The Nicene Creed had a number of anathemas attached to it, cursing those who held any of the heretical views.³

¹ Nicaea in Asia Minor where the Council was held in A.D. 325 under the presidency of the Emperor Constantine the Great.

² So Theodoret. But Socrates says five.

³ See Cuthbert Turner's *History and Use of Creeds and Anathemas in the Early Centuries of the Church* (S.P.C.K. 1910).

IV

Later there grew up the practice of the liturgical use of the creeds—that is the recitation of them in divine worship. It is possible that the primitive Christian recited his creed only once in his life, namely at his Baptism. But with the liturgical use of creeds this credal reticence was abandoned.

A passion for orthodoxy had been excited in church circles especially in the fourth and succeeding centuries and this in turn stimulated the recitation of the creeds as devotional exercises at divine worship. Various ceremonies were attached to this recitation.

In very early times the neophyte at his baptism, as he faced west, the region of darkness, renounced the devil and all his works, and then turning east to the region of light, affirmed his faith in God the Eternal Light and in Christ the Sun of Righteousness. This custom became associated with the liturgical recitation of the creed.

The primitive Christians in the second century used to make the sign of the cross on their forehead, and on their breast, when they rose, when they retired, at meals, and on various other occasions. As a natural consequence, the making of the sign of the cross became customary also at the liturgical recitation of the creed and especially at the words "In the Resurrection of the Flesh". In the Middle Ages Christian soldiers, reciting the creed, are said to have grasped the hilt of their swords as a sign of their readiness to defend the creed with the sword. This, indeed, seemed to these simple souls

the most effective way of defending the Christian Faith.

That delightfully attractive saint, St. Louis of France, told his provost-marshal Joinville, that when confronted by heretics—

“No one, unless he be a very learned clerk, should dispute with them: but a layman, when he hears the Christian law mis-said, should not defend the Christian law, unless it be with his sword, and with that he should pierce the mis-sayer in the midriff, so far as the sword will enter.”¹

The *Quicunque Vult* or Hymn of St. Athanasius, is plainly composed for liturgical use.

Another, and perhaps older, example of these liturgical creeds and a very beautiful one which possesses a popularity with English congregations, denied for obvious reasons to the *Quicunque Vult*, is “The Breastplate of St. Patrick” (fifth century):

“I bind unto myself to-day
The strong name of the Trinity.”²

What is perhaps a very early (probably first century) liturgical creed expounding the “mystery of godliness” is enshrined in the Pastoral Epistles (I *Tim.* iii, 16).

It runs thus:

“God was manifest in the flesh,
Justified in the Spirit
Seen of angels,
Preached unto the Gentiles
Believed on in the world
Received up into glory.”

¹ *Memoirs of the Crusades*, Everyman's Library, p. 148.

² For a fine translation of the Breastplate with an admirable musical setting see *Songs of Praise* (second edition, 1931) No. 528; or *English Hymnal*, No. 212.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CREED

THE creed of the Christian Church was at first very short and simple. It consisted of the declaration "I believe that Jesus is the Christ". Only a Jew or a Jewish proselyte could understand the meaning of that creed. The word Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew title "Messiah," and both words mean anointed. This anointing referred to the consecrating with oil of the Jewish kings on their accession by priest or prophet. Hence the title "the Lord's Anointed", or "Yahweh's Anointed"¹ was given to the Jewish kings. Kings ceased to reign in Judah with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., but the patriotic and pious Jews looked forward in accordance with the predictions of Israel's prophets to an ideal king of David's line, who should reign in righteousness in Zion and deliver Judah from foreign oppression. This liberation of Judaism was associated in the minds of believing Jews with the expansion of Judaism. This expansion took two forms : (1) conquest of the surrounding nations (the "Gentiles") by the Jews ; (2) extension of the Jewish religion so that all nations would come up to Zion to worship and "the earth should be full of the

¹ Yahweh is the modern spelling of Jehovah—the personal name of the God of Israel.

knowledge of the Lord (Yahweh) as the waters cover the sea."

Many were the mystical visions and poetic pictures in which Jewish prophets and poets conceived of the achievement of this ideal, this "Coming of the Kingdom of God". Yahweh, of course, was the King of this Kingdom, but his Vice-regent on earth was the Messiah.

Hence, when a Jew of the first century of the Christian era said "I believe that Jesus is the Christ", he affirmed his conviction that Jesus of Nazareth was Yahweh's Vice-regent, the fulfilment of the deepest longings and age-long expectations of the Jewish nation.

All Jews who professed this creed would not necessarily hold identical views about Jesus, for there were different ideas current in Judaism at this time about the nature of the expected Messiah, but they would all agree that Jesus was the Messiah: they would all call him Yahweh's son, a title which the ancient Jews gave to their kings of David's line. But since the Jews had ceased to use the name Yahweh as too sacred to be pronounced by human lips, they now spoke of the Messiah as "the Son of God", or the "Son of the Highest", or the "Son of the Blessed One".

Simon Peter, the disciple of Jesus, was the first to utter this primitive Christian creed. He did so at Cæsarea Philippi. Jesus accepted the declaration as true, as so profoundly true, that the recognition of its truth was beyond ordinary human insight. He declared that it was not flesh and blood, but "my

Father which is in heaven", who had unveiled this truth to Peter (cf. *Mark* viii, 27-30 : *Matthew* xvi, 13-17 : *Luke* ix, 18-21 : *John* vi, 68, 69).

But though all Jews who became Christians would agree that Jesus was the Messiah or Christ, and all would call Him the Son of God, yet they would not all agree as to the precise nature of that Divine Sonship.

(1) Some would regard that Sonship as *pneumatic* (*Pneuma* is the Greek for "Spirit"). So regarded the Divine Sonship of Jesus was the result of the out-pouring of the Divine Spirit or, as they preferred to call it, the *anointing* with the Spirit. This act of consecration by Yahweh Himself in accordance with the prediction in *Isaiah* lxi, 1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me : because the Lord hath anointed (Christened) me to preach good tidings unto the meek", etc., constituted for these believers the essence of the Divine Sonship. A careful study of the *Acts of the Apostles*, i-xii, shows that the primitive Jewish Christian Church identified Jesus with the anointed Servant of Yahweh of *Isaiah* xl-lxvi : for to possess in the fullest measure Yahweh's Spirit was to be in the fullest sense Yahweh's Son.

(2) For other Jewish Christians, it would seem from the two genealogies in *Matthew* and *Luke* that to be of the family of David was a pre-requisite for Divine Sonship. The puzzle of *Psalms* cx with which Jesus is represented in the Synoptic Gospels as posing the hostile Jews : "If David calleth him Lord, how is he then his son ?" seems to indicate that Jesus

Himself did not attach importance to Davidic descent as a pre-requisite to Divine Sonship. The statement that Jesus was of Davidic descent, although this is contradicted in the Jewish Talmud, has much to be said for it. The fact that St. Paul, a distinguished pupil of one of the great Jewish rabbis (Gamaliel) and himself as a young man, a bitter opponent of Christianity, yet believed Jesus to be "of the seed of David according to the flesh" (see *Romans* i, 3) is of itself highly significant.

(3) Other Jews who studied a very curious kind of literature, called by scholars Apocalyptic—of which the *Book of Daniel* is the classic example in the Old Testament (composed about 165 B.C.)—attached the highest importance to it as containing true visions of the future history of mankind. These Jewish students of Apocalyptic identified the Messiah with a mysterious personage who figures in it. He is called "the Son of Man" and also "the Elect One". In the later Apocalyptic literature the Messiah is presented as a spiritual pre-existent being, dwelling in heaven and in intercourse with the Most High, the "Ancient of Days", and as one who is about to appear on earth with Divine power and glory to redeem Judaism and to wreak dire vengeance on Gentile oppressors of God's people. When this is accomplished he will set up on earth a Divine Kingdom, the Kingdom of God or of Christ, and will reign for a thousand years, or for ever and ever.

These appear to have been the three Jewish views of theocratic Divine Sonship prevailing at this time. Somewhat later another view seems to have arisen,

but there are critical objections¹ to regarding it as originating in the Jewish period of the Christian Religion. It was the view that the Messiah or Christ was to be born of a Virgin by means of the operation of the Spirit of Yahweh.

(4) The primitive Jewish Christians regarded the Jewish Scriptures as full of oracles or predictions foretelling in wonderful fashion the facts of the Messiah's life and mission and the inauguration and extension of his kingdom. In the Gospels are many citations from the Old Testament which are said to have been fulfilled by Jesus. Whether Jesus made such a claim, would itself demand a volume to discuss adequately. The primitive Christian Church believed that He had made such a claim, and acting on that assumption, it searched the Old Testament with meticulous care, like the noble Bereans (*Acts* xvii, 11), for these predictions.

So overwhelmingly influential was this form of early Christian apologetic, directed with considerable effect against the Jewish gainsayers of the Christian's claim, that it has even influenced the text of our Gospels, and has led to the alteration of the original narratives about Jesus in order to make them conform more exactly to the Old Testament predictions.²

St. Paul himself was much influenced by this method of primitive Christian apologetic. When he is writing to his Corinthian converts upon the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus, especially His

¹ These are discussed in Chapter IV.

² For the evidence for this, see *Horae Synopticae* by Sir John Hawkins (second edition).

appearance after death to the primitive apostles and others, and to himself, St. Paul, strange as it may seem to modern readers, appeals also to this evidence from the Old Testament. He writes— "He was raised again the third day *according to the Scriptures*", thus indicating that he regarded the resurrection as a fulfilment of Old Testament prediction, and this no doubt was to him a very important proof of the Resurrection though not the supreme one which was the vision of Jesus Himself vouchsafed to St. Paul on the Damascus road. And it is of interest to note that this proof from Scriptural prediction is actually cited in the great creed of Christendom commonly called the Nicene Creed, in the words: "The third day he rose again *according to the Scriptures*", i.e., according to the prediction of the Old Testament Scriptures to which St. Paul refers in *I Corinthians*, xv, 4. The Gospels had not yet been written when St. Paul wrote these words.

The relevance of this appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures is of great importance for the understanding of the Doctrine of the Virgin Birth. The primitive Christians found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint (denoted by LXX) that the passage *Isaiah* vii, 14, ran thus: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and thou shalt call his name *Immanuel*," (i.e., God with us). This seemed to indicate to them clearly that the Messiah should be born of a virgin (Greek, *parthenos*), and this prediction was used by Christians in expounding a new view, or fourth view of the Divine Sonship, that the Messiah was born by the operation of the

Holy Spirit and a Virgin Mother, but with no human father.

“Is it historic fact?” is the question of the modern man. Again, a volume would be required to discuss it adequately and many volumes have been written on it. There are certain simple but important considerations which can be noted here.

Was the narrative of the Virgin Birth invented to fulfil *Isaiah* vii, 14, in the Septuagint?

This question cannot be answered by a simple Yes, or No.

The earliest references to the parentage of Jesus imply that He was the son of Joseph, a carpenter living in Nazareth, and Mary or Miriam, his wife. Mark, the earliest Gospel, makes no reference to the Virgin Birth, neither does Q (a very early Gospel source), neither does St. Paul, many of whose epistles or letters were written not only before St. Matthew's and St. Luke's Gospels, but even before St. Mark's. It is clear, however, that, when Matthew's Gospel was composed, Jewish opponents to Christianity were saying much to discredit Jesus, and one purpose of Matthew's Gospel is to disprove these charges. One of them we see reflected in the Talmud: there it is asserted that Jesus was a bastard, the son of a Roman soldier, named Panther, and an unmarried Jewish woman, named Miriam.

The literary and historical problem is thus (a) Did Matthew use the Septuagintal prediction of *Isaiah* vii, 14, to prove that although born out of wedlock, Jesus was born by a miraculous divine intervention, in accordance with the prediction of *Isaiah* in the

Septuagint version? or (b) Had the primitive Christians already begun to assert the Virgin Birth of Jesus on the basis of the Septuagint of *Isaiah* vii, 14, and so provoked Jewish antagonists to retort with the slander of a Gentile father and an illegitimate birth? The fact that we have in St. Luke a virgin birth narrative without any reference to Jewish slander seems to support the view that the Christians were first in the field and so provoked the Jewish attack on the Mother of our Lord.

Most modern historians will agree that neither the Virgin Birth nor the Panther story is historical. St. Mark and St. Paul, as we have noted, know nothing of the Virgin Birth story and equally nothing of the Panther story. The primitive literary source used by Luke in the opening chapters of his Gospel speaks frequently of "his parents" in reference to Joseph and Mary. Even Mary addressing Jesus in the Temple says of Joseph, "Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." And although Jesus Himself with Sophoclean irony replies: "Wist ye not that I must be in My Father's house?" thereby indicating that Divine fatherhood precedes and has higher claims than human fatherhood, He does not in these words deny the paternity of Joseph, for in the contemporary Jewish mind, Divine paternity and human paternity were not mutually exclusive but consonant, although in the pagan mind they seem to have been mutually exclusive. All the Messianic kings of Judah were the sons of human fathers and yet each was also the Son of Yahweh.

Some critics have even maintained that *Luke* i,

verses 34, 35 are a later insertion into the primitive narrative of Luke which originally contained no reference to a Virgin Birth, and that if these verses were omitted the expurgated narrative would simply assert that Jesus was the child of Joseph and Mary, born truly in accordance with Divine Providence, but not by any miraculous intervention. But there is not sufficient evidence in existence to justify the excision of these verses from St. Luke's narrative. It must be borne in mind, however, that modern research seems to indicate that Luke probably made two drafts of his Gospel, and the conflict of i, 34, 35 with other statements in *Luke* i and ii does suggest that verses 34, 35 were not in Luke's first draft of the narrative.

If, however, the primitive Christians were led to believe in the Virgin Birth of the Messiah on the ground that it was a fulfilment of Divine prediction, then there can be no doubt whatsoever that they were mistaken. As the Jews were quick to point out (see Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with one Trypho a Jew*, written about A.D. 150) the original Hebrew text of *Isaiah* contained no prediction at all of a Virgin Birth. The Hebrew prophet had simply said that a young woman (*almāh* not a virgin, the term may be applied equally to a married or to an unmarried young woman) was with child, and is bearing a son and he shall be called Immanuel, i.e. "God with us", as a symbol of the Divine presence with, and imminent deliverance of, Judah. The Jews asserted against the Christians that when the Septuagint translators used the term *parthenos* (which means a "virgin") they were incorrect

because the Hebrew word for virgin is *bethûlāh* not *almāh*. The primitive Christians replied that on the contrary the Septuagint translators were divinely inspired. The word *almāh* might mean either a young woman who was a virgin or a young woman who was not a virgin. Hence the Septuagint translators had been guided by Divine inspiration to make the right selection in translating the word *almāh* by the word "virgin"—as was shown by the fulfilment of the prediction in the birth of Jesus. It was then, I think, that the irritated Jews sought by their infamous retort to confound their too subtle opponents. Nevertheless from this time onward in all orthodox Christian circles the Virgin Birth view of the Divine Sonship of the Messiah was held to be true, and the denial of it heretical.

By the phrase "from this time onward" is meant the second or even the third generation of Christians. It seems that only after the Christian Church had passed forth from Palestine, and had got into the Gentile world of the Jewish Dispersion (*Diaspora*) where the new converts spoke Greek and read their Old Testament in the Septuagint Version, could the Virgin Birth story have come into being. For the Jew marriage was the sacred state and, as we have said, a child born of two human parents could be regarded as born by the special over-ruling providence of Yahweh, as for instance in the case of Samson or John the Baptist. But in the Greek-speaking world of the Gentile Churches where pagan mythologies circulated and Zeus had a number of semi-divine sons born of human mothers the idea of Christ's Divine Sonship

would assume a different form. The Jewish idea of an elective Divine Sonship of a human being consecrated by the presence and power within him of the Divine Spirit would of necessity be exchanged for a Divine Sonship half natural and half supernatural, the son himself being half-human and half-divine brought into existence by a particular act of divine intervention. It was this latter view of the Divine Sonship of Christ which dominated the non-Jewish Christian Church, and exercised a not unimportant influence on the Christological controversies of succeeding centuries.

Here it may well be asked by a modern-minded Christian : Which of the four views of Divine Sonship did Jesus Himself hold ? The question is not an easy one to answer. It may, however, be said emphatically that there is no indication whatsoever that He held the fourth view. It is clear from a number of incidents recorded in the Gospels that He knew nothing of the Virgin Birth. It is also clear that He attached little importance to physical relations in comparison with moral relations. On one occasion He asked : "Who is my Mother and who are my brethren ?" and looking round upon His disciples, He said : "Behold my mother and my brethren ! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother." (*Mark* iii, 34, 35.)

From this it is clear that by doing the Divine Will of the Heavenly Father a man realized his Divine Sonship. Our Lord taught men that by showing love to their enemies they thereby showed themselves to be children of the Highest (cf. *Luke* vi, 35.)

It is this contempt for spiritual claims based upon

physical relationships which undoubtedly underlies the question which Jesus addressed to his Jewish antagonists, If David called him Lord, how is he then his son? (*Mark* xii, 35-37; *Matt.* xxii, 41-46; *Luke* xx, 41-44.) If Jesus were of Davidic descent—which there is good reason for believing He was—He doubtless was aware of it, but attached no significance to it: physical relationship to David constituted in the mind of Jesus no ground for the claim of Messianic Sonship to God.

There is no doubt that Jesus believed Himself to be the Messianic Son. The "Messianic consciousness", as it is called, came to Him at His baptism in Jordan by John the Baptist. In Mark's account of the Baptism—the earliest—in contrast to the later accounts given by Matthew, Luke, and John—there is nothing miraculous in the narrative¹: it relates simply the experience of a Divine Call to the Messianic Sonship, accompanied by the potent presence of the Divine Spirit in his heart.

Whilst Jesus regards all men as potentially sons of God, it is clear that He is conscious of a unique relationship to the Divine Father—a relationship shared in the same degree by no other living human being. It is this unique Messianic consciousness which is expressed on His lips by the use of the terms "the Father" and "the Son" in a notable passage from that early Gospel-source, "Q": "No one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father: and who the Father is save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." (*Luke* x, 22; *Matt.* xi, 27.) The whole

¹ See my *Jesus, by an Eyewitness*, pp. 17ff.

Messianic Mission of Jesus and His specifically Messianic teaching are dependent upon His possession of this Messianic consciousness. His possession of this Messianic consciousness and the various stages by which this Messianic secret was unveiled and proclaimed by Him form the core of the Mission of Jesus and the key to its interpretation. The Fourth Gospel is late in composition and lacks in its earlier chapters the historical character of *Mark*, but it is true to the heart of the Gospel of Jesus when it makes everything centre in His Messianic consciousness.

It may be asked : Did Jesus in thinking of Himself as Messiah identify Himself with that strange mysterious figure "the Son of Man" (the Elect one) of the *Book of Enoch* ? Did He regard Himself as having consciously pre-existed in the spiritual sphere with the Divine Father ?

The answers given to this inquiry are conflicting. The older Liberal school of New Testament critics answered it negatively. They said there is no indication in the most authentic records of Jesus and His teaching that He possessed a consciousness of this pre-existence with the Divine Father. The more modern Eschatological school of New Testament critics maintain that He did possess this consciousness of pre-existence, that His application to Himself by Himself of the apocalyptic title "Son of Man" indicates it, and that the Fourth Gospel is right in stressing this consciousness of pre-existence as a very important element in His Messianic consciousness.

The position of the eschatologists is not entirely convincing. If Jesus thus identified Himself with

the pre-existent Son of Man, then we can have no hesitation in asserting that He also claimed that He would come again in the near future as the Apocalyptic Judge in the great world-assize which was to inaugurate the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth—that is, that He predicted a future which has remained unfulfilled although eagerly and prayerfully awaited by successive generations of earnest Christians.

For myself, greatly daring as it will seem in the face of the great scholars who support the eschatological view, I find it more in harmony with certain undoubted features of the personality and teaching of Jesus to regard this apocalyptic element as having been introduced into the Gospel narratives from outside sources, and not as coming directly from Jesus Himself. My main reason is that the eschatological view conflicts with the very striking and original conception which Jesus had of the Kingdom of God and the mode of its coming, a conception which is as much opposed to the contemporary views of Jewish zealots as of Jewish apocalyptists.

This original conception of the Kingdom which identifies the Coming of it with the doing of God's Will and conceives of it as a moral and spiritual force secretly permeating human society, and as a divine activity with which men could co-operate, and as a sphere of salvation into which men could enter even in this life, seems to conflict so decisively with the external, irruptive, cataclysmic wrathful conception of the Apocalyptists as to make it difficult to believe that Jesus could have held both conceptions in His

mind at the same time. When St. Paul identified the Kingdom of God with "Love, Joy, Peace, Long-suffering, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Meekness, Temperance" (*Gal.* v, 22, 23), and when the writer of the Fourth Gospel substituted Eternal Life for the Kingdom of God (as does also St. Mark in a notable passage¹) they are true to this original conception of the Kingdom in the teaching of Jesus.

Nevertheless, it has to be confessed that this original element is sadly overlaid in the Synoptists by contemporary Jewish apocalyptic presentations of the Kingdom. Moreover, there is much to be said for the view that Jesus' conception of His Messianic Sonship is mainly determined by the prophetic figure of the Spirit-anointed and Suffering Servant of Yahweh in the *Second Isaiah*, xl-lxvi, and not by the mysterious supernatural figure of the apocalyptists.

The term "Son of Man" in the *Book of Daniel* does not refer to an individual, but is the designation of the Kingdom of the Saints of the Most High.

In the *Book of Enoch* the term Son of Man does, as we have said, refer to an individual, but there is no convincing evidence that Jesus drew the title from this source. In the *Book of Ezekiel* the oft-repeated title Son of Man designates man in all his weakness in contrast to the majesty of God. In the Psalter the title Son of Man is used especially of man reflecting the Divine Nature and authority in his relation to the lower creation. It is in this sense that the title Son of Man is used in the *Epistle to the*

¹ *Mark* ix. 43-47; cp. x. 17-30.

Hebrews ii, 6f., of our Lord Himself, and it does not seem improbable that this may have been the sense in which Jesus used it of Himself. Into this sense the idea of conscious Divine pre-existence does not enter.

It is of interest and importance to note that, whatever be the precise significance of the title Son of Man as applied to Jesus, it is not applied to Him in any Christian creed.

In the Jewish period of the Christian religion the title "Christ" or "the Christ" was given to Jesus either in the form of Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus. But when the Christian Church entered upon its non-Jewish stage and became largely Greek or Gentile, the title Christ was inadequate, because apparently in many cases meaningless.¹ Something further was required. Following the custom which prevailed in the Mystery Religions, the title "the Lord" (*Kurios*) was prefixed to the personal name Jesus as the head of the cultus just like the Lord Mithras, the Lord Osiris, the Lord Serapis, but in other cases the title Son of God was added to the personal name "Jesus" or the Jewish "Jesus Christ". It is interesting to observe that in the opening verse of St. Mark's Gospel early Christian scribes have added the title Son of God to the words Jesus Christ. The title Son of Man seems to have disappeared altogether as a designation of our Lord when Christianity left its Jewish environment behind it.

¹ Tertullian about 200 says the Pagans thought that the word "Christian", pronounced by them Chrestian, meant the kind ones, not the followers of Christ, the Anointed.

The earliest extant form of the Christian Baptismal creed is contained in the simple affirmation "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God". It is that attributed to the Chamberlain of Queen Candace of Ethiopia as the confession of his Christian Faith, preliminary to his Baptism by Philip the deacon and evangelist. This creed appears in *Acts* viii, 37, of our English Authorized Version and may be seen in the text of the Laudian Codex, the chief Biblical treasure of the Bodleian Library at Oxford. As it is not found in the majority of the oldest codices of the Greek Testament, it is omitted from our English revised version. It plainly got inserted into certain codices of the Greek Testament because it reflected contemporary liturgical practice and it may be rightly claimed to be the oldest form of the Christian Baptismal creed in existence. Although the Laudian *Acts*, a codex of the very early seventh century probably brought to England by Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury, A.D. 669, and in all probability used by the Venerable Bede in his commentary on the *Acts* is the earliest extant manuscript of the New Testament to contain this creed¹, yet there is evidence that the verse containing it was known to St. Irenaeus who became Bishop of Lyons and Vienne about A.D. 178. This seems to indicate that this creed could not have been inserted in the text of *Acts* much later than the beginning of the second century. How this very short and simple creed came to be expanded, I shall explain in the next chapter.

¹ Codex D of *Acts* is defective at this point.

THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of Heaven and earth :
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, dead, and buried,
He descended into hell :
The third day, he rose again from the dead,
He ascended into Heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty :
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost :
The holy Catholick Church :
The Communion of Saints :
The Forgiveness of sins :
The Resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting.

CHAPTER III

THE EXPANSION OF THE BAPTISMAL CREED

(I) ANTI-PAGAN EXPANSION.

WHEN the Christian Religion under the statesman-like leadership of St. Paul moved out from its Jewish environment into the wider fields of the pagan Roman Empire, the brief and simple creed of the primal Jewish Christian Church, "I believe that Jesus is the Christ," underwent a process of necessary expansion.

The Jew, who became a Christian, had before that momentous event been an ardent and whole-hearted monotheist, a believer in One God. This God was Yahweh, who from being originally the tribal god of the Hebrews (and possibly of a few kindred Semitic clans like the Kenites) had become, in the minds of his worshippers, owing to the inspired teaching of the great eighth century prophets and their successors, the God of the Universe. The Jew also believed in the Spirit of Yahweh which was the life-principle in creation and the rational and moral principle in man, wisdom to the sage, courage to the hero, and spiritual insight to the prophet.

The Pagan, on the other hand, who was converted by primitive Christian missionaries, might before conversion be a polytheist or an atheist. For such a one it would not be sufficient to confess Jesus as the

Christ. Before entering the Christian Church he would have to be ready to profess belief in the One God, whom the Jews worshipped and to Whom Jesus prayed as Father, and in the Divine Spirit manifesting Himself in the gifts and graces, the faith and love, the healing powers and ecstatic utterance (*glossolalia*), of the members of that Church. Hence for the Gentile convert the Christian creed had to be expanded from one to three clauses :

*"I believe in God the Father,
And in Jesus Christ, God's unique Son,
And in the Holy Spirit."*

Just as the primitive Jewish convert to Christianity, having confessed Jesus to be the Christ, had been admitted into the Christian church by being baptized into the name of Jesus the Christ¹, so the Pagan convert, having confessed his belief in God the Father, in Jesus Christ, the unique Son of God, and in the Holy Spirit, was baptized into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The date of this custom of baptizing into the Triune Divine Name cannot be precisely determined. We have the Triune Baptismal formula in *Matthew* xxviii, 19. This Gospel was written sometime after A.D. 70 and before A.D. 90.

Professor Kirsopp Lake maintained that the Triune Baptismal formula was a later insertion into that Gospel, like the primitive creed put into the lips of the Ethiopian chamberlain in *Acts* viii, 37, and the Doxology attached to the Lord's Prayer in some

¹ *Acts* ii, 38 ; xix, 5 ; *I Cor.* i, 13 ; *Rom.* vi, 3.

codices of the Gospel. But the evidence for this insertion-hypothesis was too slight to make it seem probable to most English scholars.¹

The *Didaché*, or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, written probably somewhere between A.D. 80 and A.D. 140 is the earliest document outside the New Testament to contain the Triune Baptismal formula, and, most significantly, it also contains the earlier baptismal formula. Indeed, the two baptismal formulæ (1) into the name of the Lord Jesus, (2) into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, seem to have existed side by side for some centuries. As late as the ninth century Pope Nicolas I (A.D. 858-867) pronounced that those baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus only were validly baptized.

(2) ANTI-GNOSTIC EXPANSION OF THE FIRST ARTICLE OF THE BAPTISMAL CREED.

A second cause for the expansion of the primitive creed was due to Gnostic heretical teaching. The Gnostic sects were many and the philosophical or theological systems of their leaders (Cerinthus, Marcion, Basilides, Valentinus and many others), varied considerably as did also their manner of life—some being strongly ascetic, others hedonist.

The Gnostics were undoubtedly Christians, as Professor Burkitt has stressed in his recent volume, *Church and Gnosis* (1932), but they were not Christians

¹ See Professor Kirsopp Lake's Inaugural Lecture at Leiden, replied to by Bishop Chase in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, vi (1905).

See also Art. Baptism (Early Christian) in H.E.R.E. by K. Lake, ii. pp 481 ff.

of the traditional type. They were men of culture who sought to present an

“exposition of Christianity in terms more enlightened, and therefore more true, than Christianity as understood by vulgar believers.”¹

Gnosticism was a

“new formulation of Christianity, as understood by some second-century Christians who shared the physical and biological ideas most widely spread among ‘the educated classes’ of the Mediterranean civilization of their day. What they had dropped from ordinary Christianity was Christian Eschatology, the belief that this world was quickly coming to an end by the advent of Jesus Christ to judge the living and the resurrected dead on this earth.”²

The Gnostics, as philosophers, strove, as many have since done, to solve the problems of the origin of Matter and of the origin of Evil. For the most part they solved their problems thus. They held that Matter, being itself essentially evil, was the cause of Evil, and that not the Supreme God of the Universe, but some inferior deity (called in some of their systems the Demiurge or Artificer), was the fatuous creator of Matter. In some Gnostic systems, however, it was maintained that Matter was uncreated and had an eternal existence apart from the Will of the Supreme God.

The religious weakness of Gnosticism lay in its conviction that human salvation was to be secured

¹ *Church and Gnosis*, pp. 56f.

² *Ibid.*, 57.

by right views rather than, as traditional Christians held, by right faith and by right conduct. They adopted a very superior attitude to the rank and file of Christian believers whom they seem to have regarded as ignorant materialists. Happy in the possession of their own philosophical system, the Gnostics felt certain of salvation, called themselves spiritual (*pneumatichoi*), and regarded other men as psychical (*psuchikoi*) or materialist. They were Pharisaical Christian Theosophists with a very proper contempt for all who were not as they were. They presented a most formidable danger to the primitive Christian Church whether in Ephesus, Antioch, Rome, or Alexandria, and many thousands of Christians left their own congregations to become adherents of the Gnostic teachers.

If the attitude of the Gnostics to their fellow Christians was superior, that of the authorities of the Christian Church was bitterly antagonistic. This is illustrated by the following incident :

Marcion, the most Christian and lovable of the Gnostic heresiarchs, meeting in Rome the venerable Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, whom he had formerly known in Asia Minor, said "Recognize me, Polycarp?" and Polycarp replied, "Yes, I recognize you as the first born of Satan."

The great Christian Fathers of the second century, especially St. Ignatius, the Second Bishop of Antioch (martyred about A.D. 112) and St. Irenaeus, who became Bishop of Lyons and Vienne (about 178), contended against Gnosticism with all their power in their extant writings, and additions had to be made

to the Christian creed in order to emphasize the most important points in which traditional Christianity differed from Gnosticism.

The Gnostic, we have seen, denied that God the Father had created the material universe. It was therefore necessary to state in the creed that He had done so, so we have the clause inserted into the creed "Maker of heaven and earth". The Gnostics by postulating the existence of a subordinate irresponsible deity infringed and limited the divine government of the Most High: so to the title, God the Father, was added the term translated in our Apostles' and Nicene Creeds "Almighty". But this translation is a misleading one and is due to the Greek word *pantokrator* being translated by *omnipotens* in the Latin creed. And our English creed is a direct translation from the Latin, not from the original Greek. The Latin word *omnipotens* does mean almighty, *capable de tout*, but the Greek word *pantokrator* means the all-ruler—the Supreme Director of the Universe, not one who is capable of doing everything as is suggested by the title Almighty.

This distinction is an important one. In the Great War, agonized human beings were crying out "Why does not God stop the war?" assuming that the Christian religion taught that God could do everything and that therefore if He did not stop the war it was because He did not wish to stop it. Christian theology, however, as we see by the use of the word "All ruler" not "Almighty" in the creed, does not teach that God can do everything, but only all possible things that are in accordance with the

Divine Nature and self-limitation, and it is only experience which can teach us what those possible things are. This is no new theology. It goes back to centuries before Christ. Aristotle, the tutor of Alexander the Great, cites with approval the words of the Greek poet Agathon :

“It is impossible even for the gods to make that which has been as though it had not been.”

And we ourselves on reflection immediately recognize that it is impossible for the Eternal Goodness to do evil. And Christ Himself prayed that the cup might pass from Him *if it were possible*.

(3) ANTI-GNOSTIC EXPANSION OF THE SECOND ARTICLE OF THE BAPTISMAL CREED.

The Gnostics also caused the Church authorities to add a group of clauses to the second article of the creed which deals with Jesus Christ.

Although, as has been noted, Christ was central for the Gnostic systems, yet he does not appear in them as the historic Jesus of Nazareth, but as a purely spiritual being, an emanation (æon) from the Most High who had appeared as a phantom in the world of men. They did not believe that He had a body of flesh and blood since they regarded matter as essentially evil and hostile to spirit.

They could not, therefore, conceive of a spiritual being coming voluntarily into contact with matter even though He descended from heaven to save mankind. Hence they could not believe in the

incarnation or in a human parentage of Jesus. Equally they could not believe in His crucifixion. A phantasm cannot be nailed to a cross. They had various ways of explaining the crucifixion. Some seemed to have held that the man Jesus into whom the heavenly spiritual Christ had entered at his Baptism, was crucified, and that on the Cross he uttered the words "My God! My God! (or as they preferred to render it My strength! My strength!) Why hast thou forsaken me?" when the spiritual Christ left the man Jesus to return to heaven. It is possible that the Mohammedan notion, that Judas Iscariot was crucified instead of Jesus, goes back to some Docetic¹ Gnostic source. But, however the Gnostics explained the crucifixion, they did not believe that the Christ was crucified, that He voluntarily died on the Cross for the sake of men and to advance the Kingdom of God. Consequently, the Gnostics could not believe in His burial, His descent into the underworld of departed spirits, and His resurrection on the third day. This led to the insertion of those clauses in the creed which assert the reality of Christ's humanity, the historical fact of His death, and the wonder of His Resurrection on the third day.

"Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified dead and buried
He descended into hell (Hades)
The third day He rose again from the dead."

¹ The heresy that Christ's body was a phantasm is called Docetism, from a Greek word which means "to seem".

It is also important to note with regard to these anti-Gnostic clauses that the words "born of the Virgin Mary" were not inserted to affirm the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, but to stress the full humanity of Jesus Christ. St. Ignatius in his letters written on his way to martyrdom at Rome stresses the Virgin Birth for this very purpose against the Gnostics who denied the reality of Christ's humanity.

It is also important to note that the words "descended into Hell"¹ were not at first inserted into the creed of the Roman Church. Rufinus, the senior presbyter of the Church of Aquileia (a city in North Italy, later utterly destroyed by the barbarian invaders) wrote, towards the end of the fourth century, a most valuable commentary on the Apostles' Creed (the earliest extant commentary on the Creed) in which he notes that while the Church of Aquileia has the clause "descended into hell" in its creed, the Church of Rome has it not and that it was unknown to the churches of the East.

This doctrine of the Descent into Hell was an extremely primitive one and is connected especially with St. Peter (*Acts* ii, 27 ; *I Peter* iii, 18, 19 ; *I Peter* iv, 6).

The word Hell in this clause of the creed is ambiguous. Hell, which is an early English word meaning the *covered place*, may in this connection be held to indicate either the place of torment in the underworld [*Gehenna* (Hebrew) or *Tartarus* (Greek)], or the restful abode of departed spirits [*Sheol* (Hebrew) or *Hades* (Greek.)]

¹ *descendit ad inferna*, or *ad inferos* (Greek *Hades*, Hebrew *Sheol*).

In the most primitive narratives of the Death of Christ (see St. Peter's sermon in *Acts* ii, 27, 31) "hell" means *sheol* or *hades*. But for the medieval church it meant the abode of lost and tormented souls. The thought of Christ descending into the underworld fired the Christian imagination and assumed dramatic forms. The Harrowing of Hell, so often depicted in medieval frescoes on the walls of our parish churches, represents the Descent of the Saviour with the Cross in His hand, the terror of the torturing demons of the underworld at His approach and the prayerful thankfulness of those whom the Saviour is about to take back with Him to the regions of light and love. Swete thinks that this clause came into the creed late in the second century or very early in the third.

It is important to note that the Gnostics did not believe in any resurrection of Christ either in the earlier Christian form of that belief—a *resuscitation* of Christ's physical body on the third day after His crucifixion—or in the Fourth Gospel form of that belief—a *transmutation* of Christ's physical body into a spiritual body.

To the Gnostic the Christian belief in Christ's resurrection was as incredible as it was unnecessary.

There is little doubt that the clauses asserting Christ's Ascension, Session, and Second Advent as Judge,

*"He ascended into heaven,
And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead."*

were inserted to oppose Gnostic denials of the

traditional faith. It is true that the Gnostics believed in the Ascension or Heavenly Return of Christ to his celestial home, but the conception of the Session of Christ at the right hand of the Divine Father was alien to the thought of their system. Christ¹, for them, save in Marcion's theology, was but one of a number of Divine emanations or æons. The Gnostics had no belief in the apocalyptic dreams of primitive Christianity: they looked forward to no great Assize (derived through Jewish apocalyptists from the Zoroastrians) when Christ seated on clouds of glory should come to judge mankind. The Gnostic view of Divine Judgment, in so far as they believed in it at all, approached that view so admirably summed up in the words, *Die Weltgeschichte ist das Weltgericht*, the experience of mankind is the judgment of mankind.

Divine Judgment is not a single cataclysmic event in the future, but a moral process in which every human being shares—a process at once discriminative and creative, a combination of amputation and travail pangs, an experience resulting in remorse and enlightenment. But, so formulated, this view is really more modern than Gnostic. For the Gnostic, salvation consisted of deliverance from the fetters of matter, not from the bonds of sin. Failure to use the proffered Gnostic system brought its inevitable doom of perpetual subjugation to corruption. Intellectual acceptance of the Gnostic system brought

¹ The phrase "at the right hand of God" would seem intolerably Jewish and anthropomorphic to the Gnostics. St. John's phrase "in the bosom of the Father" (John i, 18) may be a conscious substitution for "at the right hand of God" and one which may prove more in harmony with Gnostic feeling.

the desired deliverance. In no Gnostic system was there any place for an Apocalyptic Assize presided over by Jesus Christ.

FURTHER ANTI-GNOSTIC EXPANSIONS

The Gnostics were the cause of the addition of at least two other clauses to the primitive creed. These were :

*“I believe in the Holy (Catholic) Church.
The Resurrection of the Flesh.”*

(a). THE CHURCH

The clause professing belief in the Holy Church had the adjective Catholic added later.

The Gnostic Christians trusted to the speculative reason and perhaps also to mystical intuition in the constructive formulation of their theological systems. The anti-Gnostic Christians relied upon Scripture and Church Tradition.

The Tradition appealed to was to be found in the great apostolic Sees (Rome, Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, Alexandria), Sees that could trace back their ministry and church to some great apostolic founder—a St. Peter, a St. Paul, a St. John, or a St. Mark.

The Christian Church and the testimony of that Church with its apostolic ministry and collection of sacred scriptures, not at this time by any means identical with our present New Testament, was the religious authority for the Christians of the second century. This authority was not recognized by the Gnostics who relied primarily, as we have already said,

on the speculative reason and mystical intuition. The controversy between Irenaeus and the Gnostics is like a battle royal between a whale and an elephant. Each combatant moves in his own element and neither gets within striking distance of the other.

The defenders of traditional Christianity against the Gnostics demanded from their opponents belief in the Church. They defined that Church by the term "holy" (*hagios*). From primitive times all the members of that church had been called "the holy ones" or consecrated ones (*hagioi*) and so the Church itself was naturally called "holy or consecrated."

This distinguished the Christian Church or *ekklesia* from the many other churches which existed in the Roman Empire. Every Greek city had its Church or *ekklesia*, the assembly of its citizens for legislative and judicial purposes. There were also probably Gnostic churches, for the Gnostics seem quite early to have formed separatist assemblies. The word "Synagogue" survives as the inscription over the door of a Marcionite Gnostic Church.

However, henceforth, every Gnostic who wished to be recognized as orthodox was required by the creed to profess his belief in Holy Church—a very formidable proposition since the authority of the primitive Church over the lives and activities of its members was great indeed.

It may be most convenient to note here that later on additional adjectives were added to define the character of the Church in the Christian creed. But first a brief note on the word "Church" itself.

The word "Church" is used in English to

translate the primitive Christian word *ekklesia* which means a body summoned or called forth. Very early the Christians used this as the name of their religious society. Christ Himself probably did not use it, although it is put into His lips in two passages in St. Matthew's Gospel, but St. Paul and his contemporaries used it. We see this in the *Acts of the Apostles*, and above all in the ideal picture of the Church which describes it as the body and bride of Christ in the *Epistle to the Ephesians*.

Every self-governing Greek city possessed a civic organization called the "ecclesia" or "church", which existed for purposes of legislation and administration. If there happened to be also a Christian community in that city, its members spoke of this community as the "ecclesia" or "church of God (or of Christ) sojourning in that city", in order to distinguish it from its pagan name-sake. Curiously, the word for sojourning is the origin of our English word parish or parishioner. Sojourners or temporary dwellers or strangers are in Greek *paroikoi*.

The native country of the Christian Church was heaven in which all members of the church had their Citizenship. "Our citizenship," writes St. Paul, although himself a Roman citizen, "is in heaven". (*Phil.* iii, 20.)

The English word "Church" is not derived from the Greek word *ekklesia* which passed unchanged into Latin, but is derived from another Greek word *kuriake*, which means belonging to the Lord and is used in this sense also of the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, and the First Day of the Week or the Lord's

Day. So when used of the Christian Assembly, it would stress primarily that it belonged to the Lord—His Body or His Bride, as the early Christians called it.

“HOLY”

There was great dispute as to the meaning of the word Holy and its rightful use, as applied to the Church, when the Church authorities began early in the third century to relax the primitive Church discipline and allowed persons who had been guilty of serious sins, as for instance apostasy, in order to escape martyrdom, to be re-admitted after penance into the Church. The primitive Puritan sects or Catharists, with whom we shall deal more fully in a subsequent section of this chapter, declared that by such relaxation the Church had forfeited her right to the title Holy. The Church authorities who relaxed the Church discipline declared that the adjective Holy referred to the origin and purpose of the Church, not to its membership. The second part of their defence was unsound historically for the primitive Church did only retain in its membership those who maintained the very highest moral standards, and it ruthlessly excommunicated all who fell into open sin. In its practical policy the Church was no doubt right in relaxing this drastic primitive discipline. It is far better that there should exist a Church which can include within itself many conscience-stricken sinners who are striving to become holy than a body which excommunicates all who fall below the highest standards of moral action.

Three further adjectives were added in order to describe the Church, namely Catholic, Apostolic, One. They were probably added in this chronological order and I append here a brief note on the significance of each.

“CATHOLIC”

The word Catholic has two distinct senses when applied to the Church. First it means *Universal* in contrast to *Local*. This is the earlier use and was first applied to the Christian Church, so far as extant evidence goes, by St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (martyred about A.D. 112). In one of his letters he writes :

“‘Where the bishop is there the Church is’ (meaning the local church), but ‘where Christ is there is the Catholic Church’ (meaning the whole Christian community consisting of all the local churches throughout the world).”

It is in this sense that the term Catholic is used in our Prayer Book petition for “all sorts and conditions of men”.

Secondly it means *Orthodox* in contrast to *heretical*. Hence St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century, addressing the catechumens whom he was preparing for Baptism, warns them, should they travel, to be careful with regard to the Christian Communities they associate with in foreign parts, and advises them thus :

“When you go to any foreign place do not ask for the Church there, for even the heretics call their dens by that name, but ask for the Catholic Church.”

At the time when Cyril of Jerusalem was living, a number of schismatic bodies, many of them heretical, had come into existence, and so the term "catholic" was applied to the great historic Church to distinguish it from these younger heretical bodies. It is in this second sense that the word Catholic was introduced into the Baptismal Creed.

It should be noted that there is a third but comparatively late (post-Reformation) use of the word Catholic, which limits it to designate those Christians who acknowledge the supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. The right name for such Christians is Papist or Romanist and the proper name for their church (one used even by the Pope himself) is the Roman Church. It is as provocative as it is inaccurate to use Catholic as the equivalent of Roman.

"APOSTOLIC"

The word "Apostolic" in the Creed, when applied to the Church, denotes the Church which possesses an apostolic foundation, an apostolic ministry, apostolic doctrines and apostolic scriptures in contrast to heretical bodies which lacked some of these possessions and professed to attach no importance to them.

"ONE"

The word "One" was applied to the Church in order to lay emphasis on its Unity :

"the one flock of the one shepherd"

throughout the world, in contrast to separatist bodies

of Christians. In St. John's Gospel the Good Shepherd declares "other sheep I have (*i.e.*, in the Pagan world) which are not of this fold (*i.e.*, Judaism); them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd" (x, 16).

This unity of the Christian Church is the main theme of Christ's last prayer in the company of His disciples on the night of His betrayal as given in the same Gospel—"That they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (*John* xvii, 21, cf. 11, 22, 23.) It would seem that this Unity must be spiritual and moral before it can become corporate and external.

(b). THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

It is only natural that the Gnostics who did not believe in the Resurrection of Christ's body should not believe in the resurrection of the bodies of Christians. The Gnostics believed in a future life, a blessed immortality, but they could not connect it with the body of flesh and blood worn by the Christian in this earthly life. They could not believe in the raising of that body from the grave as a preliminary to the last great judgment, nor could they believe in its transmutation into a spiritual body or integument for the spirit of man. Some Gnostics would no doubt have consented to the view that man, after death, becomes the possessor of a spiritual body, although they did not regard that spiritual body as having any real relation to the body of

flesh and blood worn by the Christian in this life.

The primitive Christian Church had no mind on this point to make any terms with Gnosticism or allow of any ambiguity in its creed of which the Gnostic, who wished to be a member of the Christian Church, might avail himself. The Christian authorities, therefore, added to their Baptismal Creed a clause which made compromise and misunderstanding and misinterpretation equally impossible. That clause asserted the resurrection of the flesh, or as an Anglo-Saxon creed renders the Latin phrase *resurrectionem carnis* "the agenrysing of fleish". It may be of interest to note here that Rufinus of Aquileia, who trembled before the fierceness of St. Jerome's zeal for this most materialistic belief in the mode of the Resurrection, seeks to placate that most human of saints by informing him that his own church, the Church of Aquileia, has so to speak "made assurance doubly sure" by declaring her belief in this article of the faith in the form, "I believe in the resurrection of *this* flesh": whereas St. Jerome's own church, the Church of Rome, made its declaration in the less emphatic form of our Apostles' Creed :

"I believe in the resurrection of *the* flesh."

Perhaps we ought to note that the doctrine of the resurrection of the bodies of the dead at the Day of Judgment originated with the Jewish Apocalyptists and is clearly predicted in *Daniel* xii, 2.

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt."

It is to that nineteenth century saint and prophet, Frederick Denison Maurice, that the Church of to-day owes its spiritual interpretation of this clause of its creed.

“AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING”

The Baptismal Creed in the second stage of its development concluded with the words “in the Resurrection of the Flesh”. The phrase “and the Life Everlasting” was a very natural addition to make to the creed. For the good Christian, the resurrection of the flesh was not the last act in the drama of human salvation. Christians in St. Jerome’s time and before it were asking what precisely happened to the body of flesh and bones raised from the grave. The view which prevailed appears to have been that in the case of the wicked that body unchanged was consigned to everlasting damnation. In that body in which he had sinned the unsaved Christian suffered the pangs of eternal death: in the case of the saved Christian, his raised flesh was transmuted into a spiritual body like Christ’s and in this body he entered into the bliss of eternal life. The phrase “And the life everlasting” was added to the Baptismal Creed to express this belief. It probably was not added before the fourth century.

“THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS”

But besides the various Gnostic sects, Cerinthian, Nicolaitan, Marcionite, Valentinian, and so forth whose teaching led to the additions to the creed already referred to, there was another group of

primitive sects of quite a different kind who also gave trouble to the Church authorities and caused the creed to be expanded on their account. This group of sects is usually called Catharist or Puritan. (The Puritans of the sixteenth and subsequent centuries had no connection with them.) These primitive puritan sects were the Montanists of the second century, the Novatianists of the third century, and the Donatists of the fourth century. Each had its own peculiar characteristics but they all had one thing in common—a desire to maintain the primitive church discipline, and to exclude rigorously from Church membership all whose moral weakness led them to fall below the highest standards of Christian purity and loyalty. But while their aim was laudable, they developed a tone and temper which resembled that of the Elder Brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son, and their harsh severity seemed to contrast strangely with the spirit of Him who was known as the “friend of publicans and prostitutes”. They have it to their credit that in contrast to the Gnostics they were rigorously orthodox in dogmatic fundamentals, but in the light of our modern way of looking at these things, which is perhaps Christ’s way, to sin against Christian love is even more serious than to sin against Christian truth.

The clause asserting the Forgiveness of Sins is the outcome of this conflict between the Church authorities and the Puritan Separatists. The Church authorities felt that the Montanists, Novatianists and Donatists in refusing to allow the right of the Church to re-admit into her ranks apostate and flagrantly

delinquent Christians, who professed sincere penitence and implored to be re-admitted, were denying the essentially Christian doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. This policy of conciliation was stoutly contested by the puritan separatists. They limited the exercise of the Church's practice in the case of the more serious moral offences to the form in which we have it expressed by our Nicene Creed in the words "I acknowledge one Baptism for the forgiveness and remission of sins". They held that all a man's sins were forgiven him at the time of his baptism, but no serious sins committed after that event could be forgiven.

As a result of this conviction we find Christians, like the Emperor Constantine the Great, postponing their baptism until they were on their death bed. This *clinical* baptism, as it was called, was the outcome of this Puritan doctrine and it introduced a most anomalous condition into Church life. The Church, in contrast to the Puritans, believed not only in the forgiveness of all sins at Baptism, but also that as the result of sincere repentance and confession sins committed after Baptism were able to be forgiven, and it is this conviction which is affirmed in the words "the forgiveness of sins" in the Apostles' Creed.

Whilst it is undoubtedly the case that the Church felt compelled to stress in her creed the Forgiveness of Sins as against the Montanist, Novatianist and Donatist limitations of the doctrine of the Divine Forgiveness, yet it seems possible that the clause in the creed which stresses the forgiveness of sins may also reflect a still earlier controversy on the subject of

sin with the Gnostics. Some of the Gnostic sects would appear to have had much in common with Sir Oliver Lodge's modern man whom, says that eminent scientist, nothing troubles less than the thought of his sins. Where, however, there is no consciousness of sin there is no consciousness of the need or the desire for forgiveness. The author of the First Epistle of St. John, which is an anti-Gnostic polemic, quotes in order to condemn it, a Gnostic aphorism, when he writes: "If we say that (citing the Gnostics) *We have no sin*, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we (anti-Gnostic Christians) confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that (citing the Gnostics again) *We have not sinned*, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us". (i, 8-10.) Where views of this kind were prevalent it might well seem necessary to the Church authorities to insert in the Church's creed a clause which required the Christian convert to assert his belief in the Forgiveness of Sins.

"THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS"

The "Communion of Saints" does not seem to have been added until fairly late in the fourth century. There have been various interpretations of it: the phrase, whether in the original Greek or in the Latin (*communio sanctorum*), might be literally translated with equal correctness as either "the communion of or sharing in holy things" or "the fellowship of holy men".

Some naturally took it in the first sense and

supposed the "holy things" to be the consecrated Bread and Wine of the Eucharist. Others took it in the second sense and interpreted it as the Invocation of the saints by those who commemorated their virtues and heroic sufferings and sang their praises in hymns and invoked their help especially on the anniversaries of their Martyrdom. Neither of these interpretations is correct. The phrase seems to have arisen in connection with St. Augustine's controversy with the Donatists, and it reflects the Augustinian doctrine of (1) a *visible* church in which the evil are ever mingled with the good (a *corpus permixtum* and an *ecclesia et sanctorum et malorum*) and (2) an *invisible* Church consisting of the heirs of eternal salvation, known not to men but to God only. Although the invisible Church is narrower than the visible Church inasmuch as all members of the visible Church do not belong to it, it is also wider than the visible Church because it comprehends many who are not within the outward fellowship of that body, for instance the patriarchs, prophets, psalmists and sages of the Old Testament. By insisting upon the Communion of Saints of the Church visible and invisible in which all good men have their fellowship, Augustine scored a controversial victory over the Donatists by making it clear that the Catholic Christian does believe in saintliness and desires fellowship with the saints, but at the same time is not willing in a spirit of harsh self-righteousness which he holds to be alien to the Spirit of Jesus to drive forth and exclude from the Church all who have fallen from her standards of saintliness or have failed to reach them.

For the modern-minded Christian the best interpretation of this much disputed phrase is to be found in the words of the First Epistle of St. John : "that ye also may have fellowship (*koinonia*, *communio*) with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (i, 3, 7). The underlying thought of these words is not so much of the fellowship which Christians have directly one with another, but of that fellowship with one another which becomes theirs because already each one of them has fellowship with God in Christ and it is this Divine fellowship which is the true basis and the highest inspiration of the best and most enduring human fellowships :

"Old friends, old scenes, will lovelier be,
As more of Heaven in each we see."

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Although the expansion of the Primitive Baptismal Creed began in the first century and was carried on vigorously in the second and third centuries, the Baptismal Creed did not reach the full form which it has in our Prayer Book until some centuries later. Dr. H. B. Swete in his immensely interesting book, *The Apostles' Creed*, makes this abundantly clear. He writes :

"*The symbolum Apostolorum* in medieval England was practically identical with that which we repeat to-day. A few variations have been collected by

Dr. Heurtley from the English versions of the Creed but all the forms, English and Latin, clearly belong to one type. It is otherwise when we go back behind the Norman Conquest. In the British Museum there are two MSS. containing Creeds, one Latin, the other Greek, which fall short of the complete Apostles' Creed in a number of important particulars. These MSS. belong, it is stated, to the eighth and ninth centuries respectively, and are both apparently of English origin. Further, they represent nearly the same text, and their text agrees very closely with the Roman Creed of the fourth century as it is represented in the Greek confession of Marcellus and in the Latin of Rufinus. It seems, then, that in England down to the ninth century, a shorter creed was current which was substantially identical with the old creed of the Roman Church and was probably brought to England by the Roman missionaries. There is reason to think that at Rome itself the shorter creed was still known in the time of Gregory the Great. The great Oxford MS. of the *Acts* (cod. Laudianus) which was written in Sardinia, or at least was in the hands of a Sardinian owner between the sixth and eighth centuries, contains the creed in a similar form written at the end of the Codex by a hand of the sixth or seventh century." (pp. 13ff.)

Thus did the Christian Church, in order to defend its traditional faith against, what St. Vincent of Lerins calls "the profane novelties of heretics", expand its primitive creed. All these additions to the creed had as we have seen a definitely *exclusive* aim. The words attributed to the Saviour in the Fourth Gospel, "Him

that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out", did not express the ecclesiastical spirit of the second and succeeding centuries.

All the Primitive Church required of her would-be members was that they should confess Jesus to be the Unique Son of the one Divine Father, but as the result of heretical speculations and disputations the would-be convert within little more than a century after the Church's foundation is required to add many more articles to his Christian profession. It is true that most of these articles had been *implicit* in his faith but the Church now insisted that they should be *explicit*. It is possible to see the advantages of this Church policy. Had the Gnostics and later heretical teachers been able to substitute their speculative beliefs for the inherited creed of the Church, serious disaster must have ensued. It is quite true that Gnostic efforts to present a philosophy of the Christian religion in harmony with contemporary culture did appeal to multitudes of Christians, and we may observe that some of the things in the traditional creed to which the Gnostics objected—for instance the materialistic doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh and the expectation that Jesus would shortly return in the clouds of heaven to judge the quick and the dead, have been, or are being, abandoned by many orthodox Christians to-day. But the Gnostic rejection of the Divine Creatorship of Nature and the manhood of Jesus was far too great a price to pay for the advantages which they offered in return. Truth slowly wins its way in the Christian Church, but not always in the way and at

the time that the prophets of new truth desire. Nevertheless the Spirit of Truth which shall guide the disciples of Jesus into all truth prevails in the end.

It seems to us, however, to have been a misfortune that the Church authorities, in order to protect the Christian Faith, should have done it by multiplying the articles of the creed and using them for purposes of exclusion and discipline. This is a policy, which however well intended, sins against Christian love. Men are saved, we believe to-day, in contrast perhaps to the beliefs of primitive Christians, not by the mere act of entering the Church, but by dwelling in it and passing progressively into a fuller knowledge of the Christian Faith and ever deeper and wider experiences of Christian Love.

This being so, it would have been better in our judgment to have kept the Baptismal declaration of Christian belief as short and as simple as possible, and to have trusted to the power of the teaching office within the Church and the force of Christian truth to expel heresies, not heretics, from the Church.

CHAPTER IV

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF CERTAIN EXPANSIONS OF THE SECOND ARTICLE OF THE BAPTISMAL CREED

BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY

(1) THE historicity of this declaration depends in some measure at least upon whether the Saviour was born at Bethlehem. If Jesus was born at Nazareth then the Virgin Birth story must be dismissed as unhistorical. Renan, in his *Vie de Jésus*, roundly asserts that "Jesus was born in Nazareth".¹ In making this statement he is following *Mark* vi, 1-6, the Gospel of St. Peter's Reminiscences. Mark relates that Jesus "went out from thence (Capernaum) and came into his native place" (*patris*). The context shows that the native place is Nazareth and it is in the synagogue there that Jesus is reported by Mark as saying "A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country (*patris*), and among his own kin, and in his own house." (vi. 4.) This statement by Jesus in the Synagogue at Nazareth is also supported by the parallel accounts in *Matthew* and *Luke*.

The definite assertions made by both Matthew and Luke in their Nativity narratives that the Saviour was born in Bethlehem of Judaea may be the not unnatural development of the fact that Jesus was of Davidic descent and Bethlehem was the *patris* of the

¹ Opening words of Chapter II.

House of David and that the prophet Micah had uttered an oracle (cited in *Matthew* ii, 5) that the Messiah should come forth from Bethlehem. On the other hand, it is possible, though improbable, in view of the conflict of evidence, that Micah's prediction may not have originated the story of the Birth at Bethlehem, but the fact of the Birth at Bethlehem may have led primitive Christians in their search for oracles in the Old Testament Scriptures to recognize that this oracle of Micah had been remarkably fulfilled in the birth of the Saviour at Bethlehem. An extremely able and interesting presentation of the case for Jesus being born at Bethlehem is contained in Sir William Ramsay's book *Was Christ Born in Bethlehem?* The learned archæologist answers this question with an unflinching affirmative.

Yet, against Sir William Ramsay's conclusion, there are not only the words in the Synagogue at Nazareth, but the fact that in all the Gospels (with the exception of the nativity narratives of Matthew and Luke) Bethlehem is never referred to in connection with the Saviour. He is popularly known as Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth: He is officially described in the title above His Cross as Jesus of Nazareth (*John* xix, 19).

In the primitive preaching in *Acts* He is always referred to as Jesus of Nazareth (*Acts* ii, 22; iii, 6; iv, 10; vi, 14; xxii, 8; xxvi, 9), and the sarcastic question in the Fourth Gospel "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"¹ (*John* i, 45, 46, cf. *John*

¹ Nazareth was so insignificant a place that it is not even mentioned in the Old Testament, Josephus, and the Talmud.

vi, 41, 42; vii, 41, 42) with the significant reply, "Come and see" constitute weighty evidence against the birth at Bethlehem. (cf. *Mark* i, 24; x, 47; xiv, 67; xvi, 6.)

(2) Another difficulty in accepting the historicity of the Virgin Birth arises from the conflicts in the narratives of Matthew and Luke, our only two evangelists who assert it. In Matthew's account Bethlehem is the home of Joseph and Mary and the Saviour is born in their house there. In Luke's account they are visitors to Bethlehem and the Saviour is born in a manger in the stable of the local inn. In Matthew's account Joseph and Mary flee with the young child into Egypt and so escape Herod's massacre of the Innocents and finally take up their residence in Nazareth because they are afraid to return to Bethlehem. Luke makes no mention of Egypt and seems to assume that Joseph and Mary returned to Nazareth shortly after the enrolment at Bethlehem. Matthew tells us of the guiding star and the visit of the Magi. Luke says nothing of this, but recounts the beautiful story of the Heavenly choir and the visit of the shepherds to the manger. Matthew tells us of the misgivings of Joseph about his betrothed and the divine oracles given in dreams which set his mind at rest. Luke writes nothing of this but tells the story of the visit of Mary to Elizabeth—the mother of John the Baptist. Matthew and Luke seem to be using entirely different sources for their birth narratives, and both of these sources will seem to the modern historian to partake more of the nature of poetic imagination and religious legend than of historic fact.

The interesting suggestion that the differences in the narratives are accounted for by Matthew's narrative being derived ultimately from Joseph while Luke's is derived ultimately from Mary is more attractive than satisfying.

(3) The difficulty of reconciling Matthew's genealogy with Luke's and both of them with actual history is very great. This difficulty does not necessarily make the narrative of the Virgin Birth unhistorical, but it does suggest that both Matthew and Luke are Christian apologists rather than scientific historians.

Since Dean Armitage Robinson's notable open letter addressed to the Archbishop of Canterbury nearly 30 years ago and prefixed to his volume *Some Thoughts on the Incarnation*, published in 1903, scholarly theologians of all schools have come to see that belief in the Virgin Birth is not a necessity for Christian orthodoxy since belief in the Incarnation does not depend on acceptance of the Virgin Birth. This being so there is obviously no necessity for retaining the Virgin Birth clause in the Christian creed.

Paul Lobstein's brief, lucid, and closely reasoned, little book¹ summarises the difficulties which the Virgin Birth presents to the modern mind.

To-day there are some apologists for the Virgin Birth who assert, that even if it be unhistorical, yet

¹ *The Virgin Birth of Christ* by Paul Lobstein. Crown Theological Library.

it ought to be retained because of its religious value.

We do not doubt that unhistorical statements may have a religious value for those who believe them, but it is hard to see how they can have any religious value for those who do not. And for the Church authorities to go on demanding assent to statements, which are discredited historically, from those who believe them to be so discredited, is to pursue a very detrimental and dangerous policy, if the Church wishes to retain its reputation as a lover and teacher of the truth and the truth alone.

“CRUCIFIED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE”

This article of the creed has the strongest historical attestation although this is not recognized by the super-sceptics of the Christ-Myth school.

It is hard to imagine that primitive Christians could have invented this shameful death for their Divine Redeemer. How Christ crucified appeared to the pagan unbeliever is curiously exemplified by a graffito (probably first century) on the walls of the Palace of the Cæsars at Rome. It is a crude sketch of a figure with an ass' head fastened to a cross, and a human being crouching before it under which in rough Greek characters is written “Alexamenos worshippeth his God”. Probably Alexamenos was an imperial slave and some pagan fellow-slave sought to satirize his religion in this way. St. Paul who wrote most, if not all, of his epistles before the gospels were compiled, writes to his Corinthian converts that he determined to know nothing among them

except Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and he adds that the Cross is to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness.

The reference too of the name of Pontius Pilate in this article fixes within narrow limits the date of the Saviour's death. Pilate was Procurator of Judaea between the years A.D. 26 and 36. And, as we see from the four Gospels, as well as from St. Peter's and St. Paul's sermons and a primitive prayer reported in the *Acts of the Apostles* (*Acts* iii, 13 ; iv, 27 ; xiii, 28) and from the Pastoral Epistles (I *Tim.* vi, 13), it was Pontius Pilate who was at least officially guilty of the judicial murder of Jesus.

"Pilate, thy name shall yet remembered be,
When those of all the Cæsars is forgot."

There are two important references to Christ, one being to His death, by Roman historians of the highest rank. Tacitus, when describing in his *Annals*¹ the horrid persecution of the Christians in Rome by Nero, says that they were the followers of one Christ, who was put to death in Judaea in the days of the Emperor Tiberius. (A.D. 14-37.) And Suetonius also, possibly with a touch of supercilious contempt and certainly with some failure in historical accuracy, writes² that the Jews in Rome, taking part in a series of disorders under one Christ, were expelled by the Emperor Claudius.

¹ XV, xlv.

² *Vita Claudii*, xxv, 4, 5. *Judeos impulsore Chresto assidue tumultuantes Roma expulsi.*

THE RESURRECTION

On the third day He rose again from the Dead.

The *fact* of the Resurrection, apart from its *details*, has a very strong historical attestation. But when the Gospel narratives of the Resurrection in *Matthew*, *Luke*, and *John* are critically compared, various differences of a serious kind are manifest. For instance, Matthew records only a Resurrection Appearance of the Saviour in Galilee, while Luke records only Resurrection appearances in Judaea; John records a number of Resurrection appearances in Judaea and one on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Moreover, it has to be remembered that the most ancient of our Gospels, that of *Mark*, does not record any actual appearances of the Risen Christ, but concludes with the words "They (the women) went out quickly and fled from the sepulchre for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man: for they were afraid". (*Mark* xvi, 8, R.V.) What follows in our Authorized and Revised Versions is not part of the original gospel, but only one of three alternative endings written long after St. Mark's day. Nevertheless although Mark does not record any Resurrection appearances, he does record at least five predictions of the Resurrection and it is hard to imagine that his Gospel in its original form did not contain an account of the fulfilment of these predictions, and harder still to see why Mark should have thought it worth while to record these predictions

if he himself did not believe they had been fulfilled.

Hence, it is absurd to dismiss airily Mark's evidence for the Resurrection, as certain higher critics sometimes do, with the words "Mark knows nothing of the fact of the Resurrection".

What was the *mode* of the Resurrection is not easily determined from the New Testament accounts for it.

(1) St. Paul seems to place the Resurrection appearance of Jesus to himself on the Damascus road on the same level as the Resurrection appearances of Jesus to the primitive apostles (I *Cor.* xv, 1ff.). In that case the Resurrection appearances of Jesus were of that psychical character for which the Psychical Research Society has accumulated much evidence in recent years.

(2) In the Fourth Gospel the writer undoubtedly puts forward the view that the physical body of Jesus in which He was crucified, was in the sepulchre transmuted into a spiritual body in which He subsequently appeared to the Apostles.

(3) There are also other New Testament references to the Resurrection which suggest that it was merely a resuscitation of Christ's physical body.

But though there be this conflict of evidence with regard to the mode or manner of the Resurrection of Christ in the Gospels and although it be possible that the phrase "on the third day" is derived from Old Testament prophecy¹ and not actual history, yet the

¹ Though the passage from *Hosea* vi, 2 : "On the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight," is never cited in the New Testament, it is probably this verse of which St. Paul is thinking when he writes in I *Cor.* xv, 4 : "He hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures".

attestation not simply of the Gospels, but of the New Testament as a whole to the fact of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, is exceedingly strong.

It was a great English judge, Lord Lyndhurst, who is reported to have said: "Such evidence as exists for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ has never been broken down": and any open-minded reader of the New Testament will see that every page of that volume is radiant with the light of the Resurrection. Had the primitive Christians not had the most intense conviction of the triumph of Jesus over death and that His living power and presence were with them in their daily life, there would have been no Christian Church at all, and certainly no Christian Church capable of going forth as we know it did, conquering and to conquer.

Apart from the evidence supplied by the New Testament and the existence of the Christian Church, there is also the evidence furnished by the joyous celebration of the Eucharist or Lord's Supper. This rite commemorates the Death of Jesus, but how could it commemorate that Death with thanksgiving if it were not believed to have been followed by the Resurrection?

There is also the evidence for the Resurrection derived from the institution of the First day of the week or Lord's Day, as the sacred day of the Christians. When it is realized that all these primitive Christians were Jews and that they were accustomed to keep the Seventh day or Sabbath as their sacred day, believing that Yahweh Himself had commanded this, it is hard to see how anything less than their

conviction that Jesus had risen from the dead on the first day of the week could have led them to assign the honour they did to that day.

That the primitive disciples firmly believed that Jesus triumphed over death and that His presence and power were with them "all the days", there can be no doubt whatsoever: but what was the specific character of the experiences which originated and confirmed this conviction cannot from the historical point of view be precisely determined.

It is not the historical critics but the workers in the fields of religious psychology and psychical research who are most likely to supply the correct answer, if such an answer be possible to this inquiry.

I BELIEVE in One God the Father Almighty,
Maker of Heaven and earth,
And of all things visible and invisible :
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God,
Begotten of his Father before all worlds,
God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God,
Begotten, not made,
Being of one substance with the Father,
By whom all things were made,
Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from
heaven,
And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary,
And was made man,
And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate.
He suffered and was buried,
And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures
And ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of the Father,
And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick
and the dead.
Whose kingdom shall have no end.
And I believe in the Holy Ghost,
The Lord, and Giver of life,
Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and
glorified,
Who spake by the Prophets.
And I believe one Catholick and Apostolick Church.
I acknowledge one Baptism for the Remission of sins.
And I look for the Resurrection of the dead,
And the life of the world to come.

CHAPTER V

THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE NICENE CREED

THE Apostles' Creed is, as we have seen, the Baptismal Creed of the Primitive Church. It originated with a single affirmation (Jesus is the Christ) in the Apostolic age and it took centuries to become expanded into its present form.

The Nicene Creed in our Prayer Book is a Conciliar Creed: and it also originated with a single affirmation and passed through a period of expansion. It came into existence as the result of a sharp theological dispute in Alexandria, some three hundred years after Christ, between an aged and much respected city rector named Arius, and the Patriarch of that great See. The Patriarch had a very young Archdeacon possessed of remarkable intellectual and controversial gifts, named Athanasius, and it fell mainly to this young man to represent his Patriarch in the dispute with Arius. Edward Gibbon, the great historian of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, in the spirit of a Voltaire, stigmatized the dispute as one about an *iota*, since the watchword of the Arians was *Homoiousios* and the watch-word of the Athanasians was *Homoousios*. The superficial reader, tickled by the witticism of our English Galileo, might be led to comment:

“Strange such difference should be
‘Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee!”

The dispute, however, concerned the most profound of all inquiries—the Nature of God. A Greek tyrant once asked a Greek philosopher: What is the Divine Nature? The Greek philosopher requested a day in which to consider his answer and prolonged the period to a week, then a month, then a year, and at the end of a year he replied, that the more he thought about the question the more difficult he found the answer to be. It was not, however, in this spirit that the Christian disputants dealt with the question. Each was convinced that he knew the answer, not because he was omniscient, but because he believed that God Himself had given the answer to mankind in Jesus Christ. The answer of Arius was the traditionalist answer. Strange as it will seem to those who do not happen to be students of Christian doctrinal development, the traditional Christian theology in Alexandria of the second and third centuries, at least in its popular form, was not Unitarian, nor Trinitarian, but Binitarian—of a strongly subordinationist type. These primitive Churchmen believed in two Gods: a great God, the Divine Father, dwelling in the light that no man can approach unto, and a lesser and subordinate God, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit they regarded as a Divine presence or power, not as a Person of the Trinity. Arius declared that the Son of God had a *like* nature (*homoiousios*) to that of the Divine Father—Athanasius declared that He had the same nature (*homoousios*).

The chief reason the Arians had for their doctrine

was that it was in harmony with the traditional teaching of their Church, its ancient prayers and hymns and doxologies. It was also supported, they believed, by Holy Scripture. One of their chief objections to the Athanasian word *homoousios* was that it was not a scriptural word and had indeed on a former occasion and in the great See of Antioch, been explicitly condemned as heretical, by a largely attended Church Council.

Athanasius, whose spirit was modernist rather than traditionalist, was not influenced by these arguments. It seemed to him that the only word which adequately described the relation of the Nature of the Father to the Nature of the Son was *homoousios*. This Greek word is equivalent to the Latin *consubstantialis*, and to the English "consubstantial", but in the Nicene Creed in our Prayer Book it is translated by the phrase "*of one substance* with the Father". This was historically the crucial phrase in this creed.

"*The Homoousion*", or the confession that the Son is of the same nature or substance with the Father, became the battle cry of the Athanasians, and when victory was finally achieved, the symbol of orthodoxy.

It was of it that Epiphanius, the "sleuth hound of heresy", wrote :

"Heretics hate the sincere profession of the *homoousion* as a serpent hates the smell of bitumen, and the scent of sesame-cake, and the burning of agate, and the smoke of storax."

The dispute became so threatening that the first

Christian Emperor Constantine the Great (born at York), called together a great council of the bishops of the Christian Church. These, to the number of three hundred and eighteen, met in the city of Nicaea in Asia Minor in A.D. 325. This assembly is known as the First General Council. After much disputation they affirmed, almost unanimously, the position of Athanasius and subscribed a creed expounding that position. They required all bishops to sign it and the two who would not were deprived of their Sees and driven into exile.

The folly of orthodox intolerance soon became manifest. Exiled Arians betook themselves to the vast communities of barbarians (Goths and Vandals) on the northern frontiers of the Roman Empire, and with a fine missionary zeal converted them to Arian Christianity. Even within the Roman Empire the Athanasian victory was not so complete as it seemed at first to be. Many supporters of Arianism arose. Numerous church councils were held. At one time the bishops who professed Arianism outnumbered those who professed Athanasianism. After the Council of Sirmium, held in A.D. 359, it was said, "The whole world (the Roman Empire) groaned and wondered to find itself Arian¹". It was not until Theodosius the Great, a strong Athanasian, ascended the throne in 379 and summoned the General Council of Constantinople, in 381, that the victory of Athanasius was finally assured.

Athanasius, a most indomitable fighter, never

¹ Jerome, *Dial. adv. Lucif.*, 19.

yielded, though at times almost single handed, hence the phrase *Athanasius contra mundum*. Five times expelled from his See of Alexandria, he survived to the year 373 and died with victory in sight.

The creed of the Council of Nicaea runs as follows :

We believe

In one God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things both visible and invisible.

And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only begotten, that is of the substance of the Father,

God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made, both those in heaven and those on earth :

Who for us men and our salvation came down and was incarnate, was made Man, Suffered,

And rose the third day, Ascended into heaven, Is coming to judge the quick and dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

This creed differs in a number of important points from our Prayer Book Nicene Creed.

First, we notice that it begins "We believe" not "I believe". Secondly, it makes no reference to the Virgin Birth. Thirdly, it stops short with the words "And in the Holy Ghost".

The creed in our Communion Service is not the creed which was set forth in Nicaea. According to the Chalcedonian Definition (a document of great doctrinal authority, A.D. 451) it was promulgated by the Second General Council held at Constantinople in the year A.D. 381. There are, however, great difficulties in the

way of accepting this statement. All that Church historians of the Council of Constantinople assert is that that Council reaffirmed the original Creed of Nicaea. At the next General Council, held at Ephesus in A.D. 431, mention is made of only the Creed of Nicaea. The problem is, Where did the creed originate which the Chalcedonian Definition states was put forth and affirmed by the Council of Constantinople? Dr. Hort, a scholar of great critical acumen, propounded the view that this creed was the baptismal creed of the Church of Jerusalem in the days of Cyril, the influential Bishop of that See. In A.D. 374 (that is some seven years before the Council of Constantinople), Epiphanius, a learned fourth century bishop who had close relations with Jerusalem, cited it in full with slight variations as an appendix to his *Ancoratus*, as an exposition of the faith; he seemed, however, to regard this creed as the creed which was put forth at Nicaea. Dr. Bethune Baker supports Hort's view of the Jerusalemite origin of the Prayer Book Nicene Creed¹ as does Dr. A. E. Burn.

Our Prayer Book Nicene Creed, then, although not the creed of the Council of Nicaea yet has the authority of the fourth General Council, that of Chalcedon. In the form in which it was promulgated at that Council, it ran thus :

¹ See J. F. Bethune Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, pp. 188f. : A. E. Burn, *Nicene Creed*, p. 21.

Dr. Badcock dissents from this view and produces a number of reasons for believing it to be not the local Baptismal Creed of the Church of Jerusalem, but the local Baptismal Creed of the Church of Constantinople. F. J. Badcock, *The History of the Creeds*, pp. 159-181.

We believe in one God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and
invisible,
And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
The only-begotten Son of God,
Begotten of the Father before all worlds,
Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not
made, of one substance of the Father,
By Whom all things were made,
Who for us men and for our salvation came down from
heaven, and became incarnate of the Holy Ghost and
the Virgin Mary, and was made man,
And was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate,
And suffered, and was buried,
And rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,
And ascended into heaven.
And sitteth on the right hand of the Father.
And shall come again with glory to judge both the quick
and the dead,
Whose kingdom shall have no end :
And in the Holy Ghost,
The Lord and Giver of Life,
Who proceedeth from the Father,
Who with the Father and the Son is jointly worshipped
and jointly glorified,
Who spake by the Prophets :
In one holy Catholic and Apostolic Church :
We acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins,
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
And the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Council of Chalcedon which confirmed this
creed inspired perhaps by those terrific words in the
Book of the Revelation :

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words
of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto

these things, God shall add into him the plagues that are written in this book :

“And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.” (xxii, 18, 19.)

concluded its Definition of Faith with the following minatory declaration :

“These things, therefore, having been formulated by us with all possible care and exactness, the holy Ecumenical Council decrees, that it shall be unlawful for any one to produce another faith (*pistis*) whether by writing, or composing, or holding, or teaching others. And those who presume either to frame another faith (*pistis*) or to publish, or teach, or deliver another Symbol (*symbolon*) to those who desire to turn to the acknowledgement of the truth from heathenism, or Judaism, or from any heresy whatsoever, these—if they are bishops or clergymen—the bishops to be deposed from the episcopate, and the clergymen from the clerical office : but if they are monks or laymen, to be anathematized.” (p. 217 Heurtley.)

Thus the last of the Four Great General Councils sought to put a definite end to creed making. It was natural enough for those in authority to desire to do this. The vast Roman Empire had been convulsed both religiously and politically by these doctrinal controversies. Every class was intensely interested in them. It was said you could not go into a barber's shop in Constantinople, when these controversies were raging, without the barber asking you whether you favoured the *homoousion* or were not overjoyed at the title *theotokos* (Mother of God) being assigned

to the Virgin. Even in the circus, the colours of the rival ecclesiastical parties were worn in the races.

The concluding paragraph of the definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon cited above reminds us of a similar pronouncement, in the history of our English Church, namely, the Declaration prefixed to the Articles put forth by Charles I by episcopal advice for the purpose of abolishing controversies among English churchmen. The significant sentences run thus :

“We hold it most agreeable . . . not to suffer unnecessary Disputations, Altercations, or Questions to be raised, which may nourish faction both in the church and in the commonwealth. We have therefore . . . thought fit . . . to ratify and confirm . . . the said Articles . . . from which we will not endure any varying or departing in the least Degree. . . . We will, that all further curious search be laid aside . . .”

And this in the face of the constitution of human nature and the ceaselessly working mind of man and the promised gift of the Spirit of Truth to lead us into all Truth !

Is it any wonder that faithful Christians with these Chalcedonian anathemas hanging over their heads should have hesitated to undertake the task of further creed-making ? Yet they did dare, even to alter this great conciliar creed, by introducing into it a clause, which became one of the reasons for the great schism between the Church of the East and that of the West. That clause is called the *Filioque*. It consists, in our English Version, of the

words "and the Son" added to the clause which speaks of the Holy Ghost proceeding from the Father. The creed with the words *et filio* was recited at a provincial council at Toledo in 589 and the addition in the form *filioque* was in time adopted throughout the whole of the Western Church but not without a very remarkable protest. At the Council of Aix (A.D. 809) at which the first Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, Charles the Great, presided, the doctrine of the Double Procession and the *Filioque* interpolation in the Chalcedonian Creed were reaffirmed. When this was communicated to the reigning Pope, Leo III, he, while agreeing in the doctrine, refused to sanction the addition, since it was not in the creed as it had been handed down to him. The delegation from the Council of Aix pointed out that to excise the interpolation would suggest that the Doctrine of the Double Procession was condemned. "Leo III advised the disuse of the practice of singing the creed, which was not sung at Rome, and he caused two silver shields to be inscribed with the true text in Greek and Latin, which he set up in St. Peter's. But the Frankish Church continued to sing the creed with the interpolation. The custom of singing the creed was only adopted at Rome in 1014 by Benedict VIII, under pressure from the Emperor Henry II, and then it was sung in its interpolated form."¹

The interpolation in the Chalcedonian Creed was, as we have said, viewed most seriously and suspiciously by the orthodox of the Eastern Church,

¹ *The History of the Creeds* by F. J. Badcock, p. 190.

because it seemed to them to split the Unity of the Godhead by deriving the Holy Spirit from two Divine Sources. The Greek Christian mind has always been strongly monotheistic whereas the Latin Christian mind has shown a strong tendency to tritheism. Indeed the Western Christian, who is not a theologian, is an unconscious Tritheist and even regards Tritheism as orthodoxy. The interpolation was no doubt made to the creed because Christians regarded it as justified by Scripture and were unconscious of its theological implications. Of course they had no right in a mere provincial council to make an addition to the creed of a General Council, but here also they were probably quite unconscious of the magnitude of their irregularity. We English churchmen, who at least geographically are Western, have become their accomplices.

But what is of more real importance than the interpolation which a later provincial council made to the Article concerning the Holy Ghost in our Great Conciliar Creed, is the addition made to the original Nicene Article dealing with the Holy Ghost in the so-called Constantinopolitan Creed and authorized by the Council of Chalcedon. This addition consisted of the words :

“The Lord and Giver of Life,
Who proceedeth from the Father,
Who with the Father and the Son is jointly worshipped
and jointly glorified,
Who spake by the Prophets :”

The most significant words in this addition are :

“The Lord and Giver of Life.”

In repeating this clause, a pause ought to be made after "the Lord", as it is a title which is entirely separate from "the Giver of Life", or better "the Life-Giver" (*ζωοποιος*, literally "Life-Maker"). The title "Lord" was given in the creed to the Holy Spirit to signify that the Holy Spirit is of the same essentially Divine Nature and Divine Majesty as the Divine Father and the Divine Son. The Church first had its controversies about God the Creator, then about the relation of the Divine Son to the Divine Father and after that, some years before the Council of Constantinople assembled, a great controversy about the nature of the Holy Spirit. This controversy was provoked by some utterances of Macedonius, Patriarch of Constantinople, who had been deposed in 360. The Article concerning the Holy Spirit was expanded to check the growth of Macedonius's erroneous teaching, and his views were condemned at the Council.

In view of these known facts about our Holy Communion Creed, Modernists would plead that our English Church authorities should introduce three changes into its text each of which would be justified in the light of its history.

(1) We would have our creed begin as it did originally with the words "We believe". It is not so much our personal conviction as the historic faith of the Christian Church which we affirm at the corporate service of the Holy Communion.

(2) Secondly, we would omit from it, as in the original Nicene Creed, the assertion of the Virgin

Birth and that not simply because it is absent from the original but because many orthodox Christians to-day regard it as unhistorical.¹ The Incarnation, as we realize and as we may presume the Nicene Fathers also realized, does not depend upon the Virgin Birth.

(3) Thirdly, we would excise the *Filioque* clause which teaches the Double Procession of the Holy Spirit and is offensive to the Eastern churches who hold fast to the Single Procession.

When dealing with alterations in our Holy Communion Creed it is of interest to note that Archbishop Cranmer omitted the words "in" and "holy" before "Catholic and Apostolic Church". His reason for omitting the "in" was that he wished to distinguish between the attitude of the Christian towards the Holy Spirit which is trust *in* him as the Spirit of Truth and the Christian's attitude towards the Catholic Church which consists of an affirmation not of trust *in* it, but merely the assertion that it exists. "Bishop Gibson suggests that Cranmer inserted 'I believe' before 'one catholic and apostolic church' to make a distinction between believing *in* the Holy Ghost and believing the Catholic Church, *i.e.*, believing that there is such a Catholic Church. Rufinus and other Latin writers often draw this distinction between believing *in* Divine Persons and believing about their work in the Church or in the remission of sins, etc. Cranmer himself in his *Annotations upon the King's Book* writes: 'I believe

¹ It was introduced into the Constantinopolitan Creed to stress Christ's humanity as against Apollinarian teaching.

in the Holy Ghost, and that there is a holy Catholic Church'." ¹

Archbishop William Temple's *bon mot* "I believe in one holy, catholic and apostolic church but greatly regret that it does not exist", is of course the precise opposite of what Archbishop Cranmer meant to affirm by this alteration. Cranmer's experiences as a Reformer precluded belief in the Catholic Church: but he had no doubt of its existence, though

"By schisms rent asunder, By heresies distrest."

Cranmer's omission of the word "holy" is believed to have been due not to doctrinal reasons but to the word having been missing in the texts of the creed on which he relied.

Of later creeds, we ought to notice the Creed of Pope Pius IV since it is the creed of a Church which comprises some three hundred millions of our fellow-Christians, and is to-day offered for their profession of faith to all converts entering that communion. This creed was put forth in A.D. 1564, and has since been added to in order to include the dogma of Papal infallibility promulgated in 1870.

It begins² by citing our Nicene Creed, it then proceeds to require the acceptance of the Roman Church's interpretation of Holy Scripture, the Seven Sacraments, the doctrines of Original Sin and Justification as defined in the decrees of the Council of Trent, the expiatory Sacrifice of the Mass for the living and the

¹ Quoted from *The Nicene Creed* by A. E. Burn, p. 47f.

² For its Latin text see *Enchiridion Symbolorum* by Denzinger and Bannwart (1928) Nos. 994-1000.

dead, the doctrines of Transubstantiation and Concomitance, Purgatory, the invocation of saints, the veneration of sacred images, the lawfulness of Indulgences, the Supremacy of the Roman Church "Mother and Mistress of all churches", and concludes by affirming that the Pope is the Vicar of Christ and that he is infallible. What a departure from the simplicity of the Primitive creeds !

"This true Catholic Faith, outside of which no one is able to be saved"—the person professing it confirms with an oath of the Gospels.

CHAPTER VI

THE HEART OF THE NICENE CREED

THE Conciliar Creed marks an important and necessary development in Christian theology. The core of the Conciliar Creed is the *homoousion*—the declaration that the Divine Nature of the Eternal Father and the Divine Nature of the Eternal Son are the same. This means that the historic Jesus is the supreme unveiling in human history of the Divine Nature, subject to human limitations. In the striking words of Dr. Edwyn Bevan—"The Inner Reality of the Universe has looked into human eyes through the eyes of Jesus Christ".

Does this mean, as many pre-Nicene Christians thought, that the Christian religion teaches that there are two gods? That belief may appeal to the Christian charcoal burner, but it is both incredible and repugnant to the Christian philosopher. The philosophical mind can be monotheist, or pantheist, or atheist, but it cannot be binitarian or polytheistic. If Arianism had prevailed, then the Christian religion would have become explicitly polytheistic and Christ a demi-god. The strength of Athanasianism is that it gave to the Christian religion a theology, liable, it is true, to constant misunderstanding and perversion, but capable of presenting the relation of Jesus Christ to the One Divine Source of All in such a way as not to split the Unity of the Godhead, nor

to leave unbridged the infinite abyss which seems to separate God and man.

In order to do this Athanasius made use of what is called the Logos Christology. The theological classic in which he expounds his doctrine is significantly entitled *Concerning the Incarnation of the Word of God*. In formulating his Christology in terms of the Word of God, Athanasius was going back to the most profound of the primitive Christian theologians—the author of the Fourth Gospel—who in his Prologue to that work had used the term, “Word” (*Logos*), in this way. Athanasius was thus securing a common ground for Christian theology and the world of Greek thought which had, especially in the philosophies of Platonism and Stoicism made use of the term, Word (*Logos*), to express their conception of the relations of the invisible to the visible universe. For these philosophical thinkers the Divine Word was the rational and moral element in the universe, and the source and expression of cosmic unity. Man, because he was in his humanity a partaker of the Divine Logos, was a real and conscious element in the Divine Cosmos.

In order to realize what may be called the apologetic value of the Logos Christology it is necessary to give heed to what Dr. Rashdall (one of the profoundest of our modern English theologians) has so clearly expressed in the following citation :

“If ‘Divine’ and ‘human’ are thought of as mutually exclusive terms, if God is thought of as simply the Maker of man, if man is thought of as merely a machine or an animal having no community of nature with the Universal

Spirit, who is the cause or source or 'ground' of the existence alike of Nature and of other spirits, then indeed it would be absurd to maintain that one human being, and one only, was both God and man at the same time. But such a view of the relation between God and man would not at the present day be accepted by any philosophy which finds any real place for God in its conception of the Universe." ¹

There are no doubt great difficulties in the way of accepting the Logos Christology but these difficulties are greatly increased by popular misrepresentation and misunderstanding. For instance it is commonly taken to mean that the whole of the Divine Logos was incarnated in Jesus Christ of Nazareth during the period of His earthly life. This belief is expressed in the words of the Epiphany Hymn :

"Those mighty Hands that made the sky
No earthly toil refuse :
The Maker of the stars on high
An humble trade pursues."

This is a way of thinking of the Logos in relation to Jesus which is frankly incredible for the philosopher. It is equally incredible for the historian. There is nothing in our most authentic records of the Life of Jesus to warrant the belief that during His earthly life He performed the cosmological functions of the Word : that He, while walking the streets and lanes of Galilee, was the operative centre, so to speak, of the Universe. The statement in the Fourth Gospel

¹ *Jesus : Human and Divine*, p. 17. Also *Modern Churchman* xi, 281.
See also Ch. II. Rashdall's *God and Man*. Blackwell 1930.

"all things were made by Him" refers to the Eternal Word of God pre-existent before creation, not to the man, Jesus of Nazareth. This popular misunderstanding is due to the Word (Logos) of God being thought of as an individual, separate from the Divine Source of all and not as an eternal Attribute and Activity of the Divine Being, manifest in the creative process and in human history in varying degrees and modes.

Christian theologians have coined terms which mark the various stages of the unveiling of the Divine Logos. First, they conceive of the *Indwelling* Word, pre-existent before the initiation of the creative process, dwelling, to use a New Testament phrase, "in the bosom of the Father". Secondly, they conceive of the Word as *proceeding forth* to carry out the Creative process. This is expressed in the words of the noble Eucharistic hymn of St. Thomas Aquinas :

"The Heavenly Word proceeding forth
Yet leaving not the Father's side."

At this stage the Word is manifest in the order and wisdom—adaptation of means to ends—in the creative process as a whole. Thirdly, they conceive of the Word as *seminal* or *spermatic*. This is the case when, in the creative process, the stage is reached at which the Word becomes the "seed" of the rational and moral consciousness of individuals. Fourthly, they conceive of the Word as *Incarnate*, finding its terrestrial home in a single individual who constitutes for it the most perfect instrument of its self-expression under human limitations. This terrestrial *organon*

of the Incarnate word is Jesus of Nazareth, in Whom the Christian Church affirms we have the supreme unveiling of the Divine Nature in human history and under human limitations.

By thus conceiving of the Word of God and His activities, Jesus Christ is brought into unique and comprehensible relations with the Divine source of all, with the Creative Process and with the individual human being. Each of us by virtue of his own rational, moral and spiritual human nature is in his degree a partaker of the Word and he becomes increasingly so, through union with Jesus Christ. It is this Logos Christology, absent from the Apostles' Creed, which is set forth in the Nicene Creed. Unless this be realized, the Nicene Creed in its most important aspect will be misunderstood.

In its second Article, professing belief "in one Lord Jesus Christ", it should be borne in mind that all the following clauses refer to the pre-incarnate Word.

"the only begotten Son of God,
 Begotten of his Father before all Worlds,
 God of¹ (literally 'out of') God,
 Light of¹ (literally 'out of') Light,
 Very God of¹ (literally 'out of') Very God,
 Begotten not made,
 Being of one substance with the Father,
 By whom all things were made" ;

Perhaps we ought to explain that when the pre-existence of Jesus Christ is spoken of, it is not the

¹ In reciting our *Nicene Creed* it is important to emphasize the word "of" in each of these three clauses.

pre-existence of the human personality of Jesus which is meant, but the pre-existence of the Eternal Word which became incarnate in Him. Orthodox theology does not teach the pre-existence of the human personality of Jesus. On the other hand, orthodox theology, since the days of the great Origen, does teach the doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Word, but this unfortunately seems almost to have disappeared from the popular teaching of Western Christendom and, as a consequence, the Incarnation has become incredible to many: or, where believed in, the believer seems to think it necessary that in order to be orthodox, he must be a Tritheist, or believer in three gods.

Underlying the whole orthodox Christian theology stand two great convictions:

- (1) That God is one.
- (2) That man is potentially a son of God.

It is the Divine Will that man shall through Jesus Christ, the "First Born of all creation", attain to all the fullness of life and perfection of nature which that kinship promises. Orthodox theology by teaching the doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Word (*Logos*) forbids us to limit, as is popularly done, the eternal Generation of the Word to the Person of Jesus Christ: this eternal generation should be extended to the whole world of finite intelligence. All rational, moral and spiritual beings have their origin in God: every moment they draw their life from Him, and share His Nature in various degrees. "In Him we live and move and have our being, for

we are also His off-spring", as said St. Paul to the philosophical Athenians. (*Acts xvii*, 28.) God dwells in human beings in proportion as they respond to His creative energy and redeeming love.

It may be asked whether this ancient Logos doctrine is not entirely out of date and whether the Christian Church ought not to jettison it. It seems to me that, rightly understood, it is most suggestive as a vehicle for modern Christian thought and teaching. It seems to harmonize admirably with the evolutionary conception of the creative process. Modern thinkers of the highest eminence have not hesitated to take this view, as the three following quotations indicate :

"We are far too apt to limit and mechanize the great doctrine of the Incarnation, which forms the centre of the Christian faith. Whatever else it may mean, it means at least this—that in the conditions of the highest human life we have access as nowhere else, to the inmost nature of the Divine. 'God manifest in the flesh' is a more profound philosophical truth than the loftiest flight of speculation that outsoars all predicates and, for the greater glory of God, declares Him unknowable."—A. S. PRINGLE-PATTISON.

"No Christian philosophy can have any value which does not bring the Incarnation into closest relation with the cosmic process."—W. R. INGE.

"We are to study the Divine in and through the human. By looking for the Divine side by side with the human, instead of discerning the Divine within the human, we miss the significance of them both."—R. C. MOBERLY.

It is only popular misunderstandings of the Logos theology which jar upon the modern mind.

QUICUNQUE VULT

WHOSOEVER will be saved : before all things it is necessary
that he hold the Catholick Faith.

Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled :
without doubt he shall perish everlastingly.

And the Catholick Faith is this : That we worship one God
in Trinity and Trinity in Unity :

Neither confounding the Persons : nor dividing the Sub-
stance.

For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son :
and another of the Holy Ghost.

But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy
Ghost is all one : the Glory equal, the Majesty co-
eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son : and such is the Holy
Ghost.

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate : and the Holy Ghost
uncreate.

The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible :
and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.

The Father eternal, the Son eternal : and the Holy Ghost
eternal.

And yet they are not three eternals : but one eternal.

As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three
uncreated : but one uncreated and one incomprehensible.

So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty : and
the Holy Ghost Almighty.

And yet they are not three Almightyes : but one Almighty.

So the Father is God, the Son is God : and the Holy Ghost
is God.

And yet they are not three Gods : but one God.

So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord : and the Holy
Ghost Lord.

And yet not three Lords : but one Lord.

For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity : to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord :

So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion : to say, There be three Gods, or three Lords.

The Father is made of none : neither created, nor begotten.

The Son is of the Father alone : not made, nor created, but begotten.

The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son : neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.

So there is one Father, not three Fathers : one Son, not three Sons : one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.

And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other : none is greater, or less than another :

But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together : and co-equal.

So that in all things, as is aforesaid : the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.

He therefore that will be saved : must thus think of the Trinity.

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation : that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the right Faith is, that we believe and confess : that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man.

God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds : and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world :

Perfect God, and perfect Man : of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting :

Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead : and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.

Who although he be God and Man : yet he is not two, but one Christ.

One : not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh : but by taking of the Manhood into God.

One altogether : not by confusion of Substance : but by unity of Person.

For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man : so God and Man is one Christ :

Who suffered for our salvation : descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.

He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty : from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies : and shall give account for their own works.

And they that have done good shall go into life everlasting : and they that have done evil into everlasting fire.

This is the Catholick Faith : which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost :

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER VII

THE CREED OF ST. ATHANASIUS

OUR third Prayer Book Creed, and one to which the English layman feels in many cases the strongest objection, is the *Quicumque Vult* (or Creed of St. Athanasius) which the Prayer Book of 1662 prescribes for use at all the great festivals of the Church and on other occasions. What the objecting layman dislikes about this creed, is not its doctrine, for that he does not profess to understand, but its dogmatic tone and its harsh condemnation of those who cannot believe its dogmatic statements. Before discussing the validity of these objections it may be best to give a few facts about the document itself.

It is described in the rubric which prefaces it as : "This confession of our Christian Faith commonly called the Creed of Saint Athanasius". This gives the unsuspecting reader the impression that it was composed by St. Athanasius. This it most certainly was not. St. Athanasius spoke and wrote in Greek. This document was originally in Latin as the title *Quicumque Vult*, its opening words, indicates. It is generally agreed by scholars that the creed originated in the Western Church, probably in the South of France, at least a couple of generations after the death of the "Father of Orthodoxy". It is quite uncertain who composed the document. The names of

many eminent churchmen, among others, Cæsarius of Arles, Faustus of Riez, Victricius of Rouen, Vincentius of Lerins, Honoratus of Arles, Martin of Braga have been suggested, but no agreement exists among students in this matter.

The Athanasian Creed is not technically a creed at all, but an exposition of the Christian Faith: and its literary form is metrical. Its only claim to the name of Saint Athanasius is that it expounds his theology, though at a more developed stage than that at which he left it. Eminent modern theologians like Professor F. C. Burkitt, have defended the use of the creed because it emphasizes the grievous need for clear thinking both on the part of teachers and taught in the Christian religion. Undoubtedly it does do this: but the modern Englishman shrinks from reciting a document which contains the idea of men being damned because they are muddle-headed. Such an assertion as "He therefore that will be saved: must thus think of the Trinity" seems to him to go far beyond the teaching of Jesus and that of the New Testament generally.

Whether the highly technical and speculative statements of the *Quicumque Vult* be true or not, at least they are deductions from, not declarations of, Holy Scripture. And so they seem to the layman to be wise beyond what is written, even though Article VIII of which the layman knows nothing declares that the statements of this creed "may be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture". In any case the layman believes that a man is saved by his character and his conduct, and not by the creed that

he professes. The defender of the *Quicunque Vult* points out to him that character and conduct are the outcome of conviction and that it is Christian conviction that is expressed in the creed. The layman retorts that it is not Christian conviction in the sense that it consists of convictions taught by Christ: it is merely the conclusions of church controversialists some centuries after Christ's crucifixion, and that the language in which these controversial conclusions are stated in the creed is so technical as to be incomprehensible. In fact the use of the word "incomprehensible" itself in the creed does not mean *incomprehensible* in our modern use of the term, but infinite.¹ What layman without a world of explanation can understand the meaning of such a declaration as: "neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance"? The Persons are not individuals, though our modern use of the word "person" would suggest that they were, but are distinctions within the Divine essence. And how can the layman confound these persons when he does not know what they are or even whether they exist, even though Sabellius and some other primitive heretics were guilty of this theological crime?

And again what does the layman know of "dividing the Substance"? What is substance? It is the Divine essence. And who divided it? It was the heresiarch Arius when he declared that the Son was not of the same Divine Substance as the Father. It is then on the ground of the intolerance and technicality of the

¹ It would have saved much misunderstanding if the clause "the Father incomprehensible" had been rendered by "the Father infinite", etc.

Quicumque Vult that the laity with few exceptions are opposed to its use in the public services of the Church. And they are right in their objection. It is important truly to teach the value of right thinking in religion but it can be done in much better ways than by chanting the *Quicumque Vult* on the great festal services of the Church.

The intolerant tone of the *Quicumque Vult* can probably be explained, if not excused, on the ground that though a positive and precise declaration of the orthodox faith, it was not intended perhaps so much for the comfort of the orthodox as for the discomfort of their Arian persecutors. It was some satisfaction, though not a Christian satisfaction, for the reciters of the *Quicumque Vult* to feel that these unorthodox persecutors would suffer infinitely more in the future than they themselves who were being persecuted in the present.

For the theologian, the *Quicumque Vult* is of no little interest and value, and the terseness, precision, and rhythm of its post-classical latinity charm the ear which can appreciate literary style. But the public recitation of the creed has done much harm to the influence of the Christian Religion in England. It has lent force to the attacks of atheist and agnostics and has introduced a jarring note into public Christian worship on occasions when such a discord caused the greatest pain.

I am not attempting here to give any detailed exposition of this document. Such detailed exposition could perform no popular service and we may hope that within the next few years the *Quicumque*

Vult will cease to be used in the public worship of the Church. The Golden Sentence in the creed, as profound as it is stimulating, is that which describes the Incarnation as consummated, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by taking of the manhood into God.

WE BELIEVE :

God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

God is Light, and if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.

God is Love, and everyone that loveth is born of God and knoweth God.

Jesus is the Son of God, and God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

We are children of God, and He hath given us of His Spirit. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. *Amen.*

I BELIEVE in God, the Father of all :

And in Jesus Christ, Revealer of God and Saviour of men :

And in the Spirit of Holiness, which is the Spirit of God and of Jesus.

By which Spirit man is made divine.

I acknowledge the communion of all faithful people

In beauty, goodness and truth :

And I believe in the forgiveness of sins,

The glory of righteousness,

The victory of love, and the Life Eternal.

CHAPTER VIII

NEW CREEDS FOR OLD

THIS brief account of the results of the study of the creeds in the light of modern research may seem uninvitingly negative to some. They will say we have learnt that the Apostles' Creed was not composed by the Apostles: that the Nicene Creed was not the creed of the Council of Nicæa: that the Athanasian Creed was not written by St. Athanasius. I would reply that while these conclusions cannot be denied, they are not the most significant of those presented here. It is of more importance that we have learnt the very brief and simple forms from which our creeds originated, and the causes which led to the expansion of them. Of hardly less value is the better understanding of many of their statements, as seen against the background of the controversies which produced them. Even to know something of the varied uses of the creeds is not without interest.

Such knowledge helps us to give the right answer to certain practical questions. We ask: Are the creeds adequate for the Church of to-day?

We are compelled to confess that practical experience whether at the font, or in the confirmation class, or in the pulpit, or in the teachers' training college, or in the theological college, or in the university, provides melancholy evidence that they do not meet

modern needs. And in the light of the history of the creeds this conclusion is not in the least surprising. The formulation of new creeds or the expansion of old ones has always marked the more mentally alive, if also the more controversial periods, in the history of the Church. An advance in knowledge, a changed outlook, new intellectual and moral needs demand a reformulation of the Christian faith. "A new earth," as has been said, "needs new heavens." How vast has been the increase of knowledge since our creeds were written! How changed is the Christian's outlook whether it be in the way in which he regards the Universe, or the Bible, or himself!

The creeds are all pre-Copernican, pre-Darwinian, in short pre-scientific. But when we say the creeds are pre-Copernican we understate the case. Their conception of the physical universe is more archaic even than the Ptolemaic which preceded the Copernican. Our creeds presuppose that very primitive view of the Universe which has been called three-storeyed. Man dwells on the ground floor; God on the first floor; the devil in the cellar. When Christ is said to have "descended" and "ascended" the creed is speaking in terms of this conception of the Universe; but such terms if used spatially have no meaning for the modern mind. Spatially God is not above us, though in the order of being He is. Similarly, He has no right hand, though for anthropomorphic thinking He had. Such phrases in our creeds, though justified by the Scriptures, give an intolerably archaic impression of the Christian religion to modern youth.

Anyone really acquainted with the lay mind of the modern Englishman, not perhaps as it expresses itself in the Church Assembly, where its laicism has been carefully screened out—but as we hear it in its more liberated moments, when it feels it has a sympathetic audience, either in the press or in the study, knows that it regards our creeds as ecclesiastical archaisms, quite intolerable if one took them seriously, but of course one does not. Many examples could be given of this, but I limit myself to two.

Arthur Clutton-Brock, the literary critic, in a letter written to me in his later years about the creeds said :

“I do not think that any of the existing creeds do express the real Christian unity of faith. What is needed is a new creed that shall express, in current terms, that unity. The use of a creed is that people know whether or not they really agree with the body professing that creed. This function is not performed by any of the existing creeds. On the contrary, the aim of most Christians—who wish to remain members of the Church is, by some means or other, to accommodate the statements of the existing creeds to their real beliefs. The production of a real and efficient creed would be difficult, but it is, I think, a necessity.”

My second example is drawn from an article recently contributed to the *Spectator*¹ by the distinguished son of a distinguished father, both of them ardent believers in the mission of the English Church to the English people, but both of them not without deep misgivings lest the Church should fail in her vocation. Sir Arnold Wilson wrote :

¹ December 9th, 1932.

"I have been invited to comment on the views expressed in the article published in last week's *Spectator* under the title 'A Christian's Faith'. I do so with reluctance, as an individual, not as representing a school of thought; with diffidence and humility, as one unversed in the most difficult and most profound, because the most personal of all studies. The writer of the article in question begins by asking how much of the Apostles' Creed, and with what interpretation, the plain man of the twentieth century can take as the foundation of his inner life. He assumes, and I accept, the necessity of a Creed for a Church as a symbol of union among those in communion with that Church.

"I personally regard the Apostles' and other Creeds as the banners on the walls of our Cathedrals, under which men fought of old because they had to fight against foes and for causes now forgotten, but under which they fight no longer. The Church has in successive ages revised such formularies, and the time has come for further revision, for no creed can be more than a milestone. The eye of faith, with widening experience, must ever change the horizon of belief. 'I have yet many things to say unto you,' said Christ to his disciples, 'but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth.' I look on the Creeds as witnesses to the historical continuity of spiritual development in man, rather than as infallible guides, and recognize them to be expressed in the metaphor and language of the now obsolete thought of the times in which they were composed."

I once heard a very distinguished scientist, addressing a body of Churchmen, turn the tables on the prevalent clerical criticism of the Materialism of science, by pointing to "the Materialism of the Christian Creeds". The Christian Creeds are of course essentially spiritual in their conception of the universe

and its purpose, but unfortunately those creeds are marred in some of their clauses, by various Time, Space, and Matter concepts which give a materialistic impression to modern ears. We cannot excise these clauses without being guilty of ecclesiastical Vandalism, but it is a comparatively simple matter to compose creeds which omit them. Why should the Incarnation be tied to the Virgin Birth? Why should Divine Judgment be tied to a Great Assize? Why should Personal Immortality be tied to a Resurrection of Relics?

These views voiced by men of culture, equally express the opinion of the plain man. The facile excuse that a creed formulated to-day would in all probability be out of date a generation hence is fallacious. There are ancient creeds which give no indication of being out of date even after 2,000 years, but those are not the creeds we are using to-day in church. Eternal truths can be expressed in enduring forms—"Jewels five words long, which on the outstretched finger of Old Time, sparkle for ever."

The Christian Church does not need to have creeds which present all the conclusions of modern scientific research in the form of Articles of the Christian Faith, but the Church does need to have nothing in her creeds which conflicts with those assured scientific results. The way to meet this changed situation is to have very simple creeds, creeds which confine themselves to the great fundamentals of the Christian Faith and restrict themselves to the affirmation of spiritual and moral truth.

This brief examination of our Church's creeds

has made it only too clear that they contain a number of statements—it may be of the Virgin Birth : the future advent of Christ in the clouds of heaven : the resurrection of mortal bodies from the grave—which are not to-day believed by the vast majority of educated men in Christian countries and never will be believed again. On the other hand an examination of our creeds shows that they do contain great affirmations of Christian faith and hope, which are still the possession of all Christians—simple or cultured. It is therefore no very unnatural conclusion to have arrived at, that we need creeds which concern themselves with the latter and get rid of the former.

To perform surgical operations on our existing creeds is, however, repellent to our historical sense. No trained archæologist would think of modernizing an ancient Saxon or Norman font, and to modernize the ancient Baptismal Creed would be as unthinkable. We have no quarrel with the ancient creeds : we view them with that reverence and interest which we feel for some ancient building which we might have very good reasons for declining to invite anyone to live in.

But, whilst it is clear that we require a great simplification in the form in which the Church should proclaim her faith to-day, the question arises whether the range of, for instance, our Baptismal Creed ought not to be greatly increased and this would apply to all creeds used liturgically. One objection, which the modern man feels as he listens to either the Apostles' Creed or to the Nicene Creed, is that

they present the Christian religion in too narrow a way; as something which consists primarily in assenting to a number of propositions, religious and historical.

The Christian Religion as proclaimed by Jesus Christ was strikingly ethical. His words: "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say", made His disciples realize that it was deeds not words, character not creed, that He valued. A verbal profession of the Christian Faith which omits all reference to Christian conduct is one-sided. The type of creed we need to-day should contain not only a declaration of Christian faith, which is a wider and deeper thing than Christian belief, but also a declaration of Christian duty and Christian experience.

There are others who would limit the creed to the words of our Lord, and on the principle that *lex orandi* is *lex credendi* would constitute the Lord's Prayer the Christian creed. Others would prefer the eight Beatitudes. Others would substitute the two great Commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself". Some have viewed such proposed Scriptural creeds with disapprobation, as not distinctively Christian. They have affirmed that Jews and Mohammedans and even Buddhists have been willing to unite with Christians in their recitation. Perhaps the Christianity of the future will not regard this as an insuperable objection to their use. It seems more than doubtful whether

our Lord would have done so ; and, as a certain American Dean once remarked : "There is no need to be more orthodox than Jesus Christ".

When a *distinctively* Christian creed is demanded, what is too often meant is an *exclusively* Christian creed—a creed which will exclude those who are not regarded by others as Christians, although regarding themselves as such. We doubt whether such a creed can be Christian at all ; at least it is un-Christian in its intention. Christ is narrated to have said : "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out".

The Church of to-day needs a simple comprehensive creed which will unite all those who call Jesus Christ their Lord and try to obey the principles of His teaching. We do not want a creed which seems to make the Christian religion a matter of merely holding fast the traditional Christian belief in the traditional form ; which seems to stress assent to a series of propositions as constituting the main obligation of the Christian life, and omits all reference to Christian practice—a creed which, Cardinal Newman once plaintively remarked, Dives feels it no harder to accept than Lazarus.

In this age of transition it would probably be best not to attempt the drastic step of substituting new creeds for old, but rather the policy of authorizing new creeds to be used as optional alternatives of the old creeds, where such a practice is desired. The choice of the alternative creed to be used in the Church Service should be left to the decision of the laity concerned, not to the clergyman who, in this,

as in all his functions, is the servant of the servants of God.

Although we are of opinion that the new alternative creeds would do well to make use of Scriptural language with its power of awakening sacred associations, yet other alternative creeds might be provided by the reinstatement of those simpler primitive creeds which the later church felt it necessary to expand but for whose expansion there is no need to-day.

There are a number of modern creeds in existence and we give two of them here.

I BELIEVE in God, the Father of all :

And in Jesus Christ, Revealer of God and Saviour of men :
And in the Spirit of Holiness, which is the Spirit of God and
of Jesus.

By which Spirit man is made divine.

I acknowledge the communion of all faithful people

In beauty, goodness and truth :

And I believe in the forgiveness of sins,

The glory of righteousness,

The Victory of Love, and the Life Eternal.

WE BELIEVE :

God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship
Him in spirit and in truth.

God is Light, and if we walk in the light, as He is in the
light, we have fellowship one with another.

God is Love, and everyone that loveth is born of God and
knoweth God.

Jesus is the Son of God, and God hath given to us eternal
life, and this life is in His Son.

We are children of God, and He hath given us of His Spirit.

If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

The world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Many more new creeds might be produced if the Church authorities showed any readiness to sanction their use in our church services.

We wish it to be clearly understood that we do not want to deprive our fellow-churchmen of having their children baptized with the ancient Baptismal creed if they desire it. But we are convinced, that there should be provided an alternative creed, of such a type as we have suggested, for the growing number of churchmen who cannot give loyal assent to the propositions of the prescribed Baptismal Creed.

Of course it may be said that these modern-minded churchmen should not demand a new alternative creed, but be satisfied to interpret the old Baptismal Creed, not literally, but in a liberal way. Liberal interpretation especially in the case of the Baptismal Creed, is open to serious objection. To plain men it seems dishonest, and to simple men it requires a great deal of explanation. To explain a creed in such a way as to give a forced, or unnatural, or even contradictory, meaning to its apparent sense, deprives the creed of its authority and inspiration. A creed, which does not express literally the conviction of him who utters it, comes perilously near to being no creed at all. In rehearsing his creed a man ought to say what he means and mean what he says.

It matters little how short and how simple the profession at Baptism is, if only it be sincere. It is

therefore on this ground, especially as the Baptismal Creed must be used for teaching the young in their preparation for confirmation, that we press upon our church authorities the urgent necessity for one or more alternative Baptismal Creeds of the simplest kind.

With regard to the creed used at the Holy Communion the matter seems to us to be somewhat different.

Modern Churchmen, while they believe strongly in truth and freedom, believe also in love and continuity. At the Communion service the creed is used liturgically and if, as we have proposed, certain alterations were made in our Nicene Creed which brought it nearer to the original form, it could be used not necessarily as an expression of individual belief, but as the expression of the historic faith of the Christian Church. It could be used in this way as a symbol of both unity and continuity.

In the ordinary services of Morning and Evening Prayer, it might be well to dispense with the recitation of all creeds. But if it be thought desirable to include the recitation of creeds in such services, then a number of new forms ought to be supplied, which, as we have said, should not be simply confessions of Christian faith, but also of Christian duty, and Christian experience.

I know, of course, that many reasons will be urged against providing new and alternative creeds. It will be urged that we ought not to do this without the authority of a General Council. That means, of course, that we may have to wait until the millennium.

Archbishop Cranmer made his appeal to the next General Council and it is nearly four centuries since that appeal was made.

It will be urged that the authorization of new alternative creeds will widen the breach between Rome and ourselves. Be it wide or narrow, nothing can bridge that gulf while an absolutist papacy survives. As for the Orthodox Churches of the East, we have no mind to chain them to our chariot wheels or to be chained to theirs, if their will is to stand still, and our will is to go forward. New alternative creeds need not prevent intercommunion between the Eastern Churches and ourselves, especially if we are willing to use the Conciliar Creed at the Eucharist. We unite in that sacred rite not on the ground that we are agreed in our conclusions on a large number of disputable points, both of doctrine and practice, but on the ground that we are worshippers of the one true God supremely unveiled in human history in the personality of Jesus Christ, and are desirous of sharing in the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit.

In this connection the following citation from the writings of the learned Roman Catholic liturgiologist, the late Adrian Fortescue, should carry weight with traditionalists :

"It is . . . a very naïve mistake to think that all Christendom ever agreed in recognizing one, or two, or three, creeds as final, authoritative and quasi-inspired documents. A creed is simply a statement of certain chief points of the faith, drawn up by some council, bishop, or even private person, for use at baptism or (later) other function. There have been scores of creeds made by all kinds of people ; their authority is just that of the people who made and

use them. No creed contains the whole faith, from any point of view. No creed even pretends to be inspired : none is a final standard in itself, but must rather be measured by its conformity to another standard, like any other ecclesiastical document. To appeal to 'the Creeds' is almost as futile as to appeal to introits or collects. One must first say which creeds, and why."¹

There is always the danger when discussing the creeds of lapsing into the superficial view that in affirming them we are giving assent to a series of intellectual propositions and not that we are declaring our whole-hearted faith in the Divine Being—in short that we are declaring a moral and spiritual relationship and attitude. When we recite the opening words of the creed we do not assert primarily that we believe that God exists nor that we believe His spoken word, but that we entrust ourselves to Him.²

We cannot conclude this present chapter without reminding ourselves that verbal professions, however sincerely made, constitute but a very small part of the Christian life.

"A mightier Church shall come, whose covenant word
Shall be the deeds of Love. Not *credo* then.
Amo shall be the pass-word through her gates."

¹ Adrian Fortescue, *The Mass*, ed. 1914, p. 286.

² If the creed meant I believe that God exists then it would run "*Credo Deum esse*" : if it meant I believe God's word then the creed would run "*Credo Deo*" : but since the creed runs "*Credo in Deum*" it means "I have absolute trust in God."

CHAPTER IX

THE CLERGY AND THE CREEDS

So far we have in this popular treatment of the creeds had the laity in view and not the clergy. It is right that we should : the laity are the *plebs Dei*—the people of God : the clergy are *servi servorum Dei*—the slaves of the slaves of God. Nevertheless, the relation of the clergy to the creeds is of great importance. The clergy are compelled to recite the creeds publicly, to propose the creeds for assent at Baptism and at the visitation of the sick, to expound the creeds to their candidates for confirmation, to subscribe the creeds as a necessary condition of holding office in the Church and receiving its emoluments.

If the clergy do not believe portions of the creeds, it seems a serious sin against veracity for them so to use them : to attempt the defence of such action seems casuistical. Nevertheless, some defence is demanded, but in attempting it, we only do so on the understanding that our defence is not one for all time, but simply for an age of transition. Our age is one of rapid progress in thought and knowledge, and of slower adjustment of our institutions to our new outlook. We must allow a great historic institution, like the Church, time to make these needful adjustments. If we are evolutionists and not revolutionists, it is the duty of the officials of an institution to carry on during the period of readjustment. Of

course if the institution declares deliberately that it is not going to adjust its constitution to a new environment, then its officials are under no obligation to carry on.

It cannot yet be said that the bishops have deliberately declined to face the problem of the creeds and that they have refused all remedy. They have in a number of cases permitted a very liberal interpretation of the creeds. They have for instance ordained men, who did not regard the Virgin Birth as historical, and who told their bishop before he ordained them that they did not so believe. Some will doubt if such conduct, either on the part of bishops or ordinands, was morally justifiable. The argument for a liberal, as against a literal, interpretation of the creeds is best studied in the classic controversy between Dr. Hastings Rashdall and Professor Henry Sidgwick in the *International Journal of Ethics* (1896, 1897).¹ Rashdall contended for the morality of the liberal interpretation: Sidgwick against it. Dr. Bernard Bosanquet summed up and reviewed the arguments in the *International Journal of Ethics* (1898). His verdict is in favour of Rashdall. He wrote:

"I do not believe that the problem of remaining or not remaining a minister of a certain church ought to be represented primarily by the question of believing or not believing in some of the documents in which it (the Church) requires belief to be professed. I do not think that this is the primary question even for the most critically minded.

"(That question is) whether reading together the various

¹ Sidgwick's articles are also published in his *Practical Ethics*, 1898.

formularies and accepted expressions of the Church's doctrine, and considering its history and present work and aims, its cause seems one desirable to promote, and one in promoting which the individual could find his best life work. In reviewing this question, anyone would give weight to such a fact as that formularies, to him obsolete, have to be recited by him in the ritual with an expression of belief. But to anyone who has been able to decide the main question in the affirmative, the question of veracity would be so greatly modified as to present little difficulty."

This practical common-sense judgment, which regards whole-hearted loyalty and not verbal veracity as the decisive factor in determining the moral right to hold office in an institution, is essentially sound. Who would dare to say that one who feels towards the Church of England as does the author of the following quotation is not entitled, on the grounds of his loyalty, although a modernist of modernists, to serve among her clergy?

"I am at home in this Church of England. I love it. The sacred influences of my life dawned within its fold. The memories of my childhood, of my first home, of my first attachments, are steeped in its benediction. Snatches from its liturgy, mottoes from its walls, legends from its windows, the awe of its music, the peace of its sanctuary—these woke the better man in me, gave me my first ideals, spelt out my first watchwords, introduced me to the things most high. If heaven lies about us in our infancy, heaven broke through the veil to me sacramentally in the worship of that wonderful Church. It spoke to me. The peal of its bells and the accents of its prayer and praise yet reverberate from those old days in the corridors of my remembrance with a lifelong, incomparable charm. For me that Church has never failed. Early and late, from

youth to middle age, the Church of my fathers has been to me the channel of wisdom and grace and has fed with divine nutrition my ultimate needs . . .

"I believe in the spirit of the Church of England—the spirit which through fifteen hundred years and more projected, adumbrated the doctrines. There is a soul in this august institution. That soul has stammered out its own unspeakable experience through the centuries in liturgies, hymnodies, theologies, confessions, homilies, debates.

"These lisping notes of the intelligence are the language of the soul—a language which in dim degree, tentatively, fallibly, variably intimates the experience within, the life hid with Christ in God of the society. The language intimates the experience, conserves it, transmits it: is a vessel in which the experience is held. The language must be there. But it is the soul which matters. The language changes, has changed, will change; is never more than suggestive: discloses at its first word and its last its own ingrained insufficiency: must be mended in its expression from one generation to another, that it may not fall too far short of its necessary, verbal endeavour. The language, though requisite, is light and secondary. It is the soul which matters. I believe in the soul of the Church of England: it is the Holy Ghost within those limits: I have been born again of it: all that is best in me is akin to it: my real self belongs to it and it is intrinsically mine. At the root of things it is this, not dogmatic technique and propriety, which makes a Churchman."¹

But this policy of a liberal interpretation of the creed in harmony with its fundamental religious significance, not in accordance with its plain verbal statements, is not profitable nor indeed possible as a *permanent* practice. The person who repeats the creed must be enabled to mean what he says, and say what

¹ *Theological Room*, by Hubert Handley, pp. 126-128.

he means. Meanwhile, it is incumbent on all who recognize the archaic character of our creeds to do all in their power to provide new formularies. A grave defect in the moribund Deposited Book of 1928 was that it made no provision to meet this crying need of modern-minded English Churchmen. What the clergy have to be careful about is not "basely through silence" to allow it to be supposed that they believe the creeds literally when they do not, or teach their congregations to accept literally what they ought not to accept literally. The only moral justification for the clergy's acceptance of the present anomalous situation by which they are officially compelled to say with their lips what they do not believe in their hearts, is that they should strive with all their power for credal reform.

"The ears of the laity are more sacred than the tongues of the clergy," so wrote a Father of the Church. Surely this is painfully true of the lay ear of the plain man when listening to the tongue of the clerical sophist saying that he does believe what he does not believe. *Propter Zion non tacebo* must be the motto of all truth-loving clergy and bishops in this matter of credal reform. We do not urge the clergy to organize conscientious refusal to recite the creeds for that might be even more disastrous than the progressive dry rot of the present situation. There is a *tertium quid*, a *via media*—the sanctioning of the alternative use of simple, truthful, and if necessary modern creeds, and every clergyman who cannot repeat our authorized creeds in their literal sense ought to throw himself into the campaign for this

urgent reform. If through inertia, cowardice, and sophistry this needful concession to veracity be refused, then the modern-minded clergy and laity may with moral justification organize conscientious refusal against reciting the traditional creeds, or as truth-loving Englishmen, withdraw from the ministry and membership of a Church undeserving of their love and loyalty. "Christ called Himself the Truth, He did not call Himself Tradition," so wrote Tertullian, and all who are Christ's disciples must therefore reject traditional formularies when they are found to be in conflict with the Truth.

THE END

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